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THE

MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS

OF

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

Lectures on the Age of Eliz
Chas. & Sts. Plays.

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THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

IN THE NAME OF ITS AUTHOR,

TO

BASIL MONTAGU.

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE LAST LONDON EDITION,

BY THE AUTHOR'S SON.

The former editions of the Lectures, originally delivered by the author at the Surrey Institution in 1818, and published in the same year, having become exhausted, the present reprint has been undertaken, for the purpose of supplying the constant and increasing demand which is made for it.

There is no feature in the retrospect of the last few years, more important and more delightful than the steady advance of an improved taste in literature: and both as a cause and as a consequence of this, the works of William Hazlitt, which heretofore have been duly appreciated only by the few, are now having ample justice done them by the many. With reference to the present work, the Edinburgh Review eloquently observes, "Mr. Hazlitt possesses one noble quality at least for the office which he has chosen, in the intense admiration and love which he feels for the great authors on whose excellencies he chiefly dwells. His relish for their beauties is so keen, that while he describes them, the pleasures which they impart become almost palpable to the sense, and we seem, scarcely in a figure, to feast and banquet on their 'nectared sweets.' He introduces us almost corporally into the divine presence of the great of old time—enables us to hear the living oracles of wisdom drop from their lips—and makes us partakers, not only of those joys which they diffused, out of those which they felt in the inmost recesses of their souls. He draws aside the veil of time with a hand tremulous with

mingled delight and reverence ; and descants with kindling enthusiasm, on all the delicacies of that picture of genius which he discloses. His intense admiration of intellectual beauty seems always to sharpen his critical faculties. He perceives it, by a kind of intuitive power, how deeply soever it may be buried in rubbish ; and separates it in a moment from all that would encumber or deface it. At the same time, he exhibits to us those hidden sources of beauty, not like an anatomist, but like a lover. He does not coolly dissect the form to show the springs whence the blood flows all eloquent, and the divine expression is kindled ; but makes us feel in the sparkling or softened eye, the wreathed smile, and the tender bloom. In a word, he at once analyzes and describes—so that our enjoyments of loveliness are not chilled, but brightened by our acquaintance with their inward sources. The knowledge communicated in his lectures breaks no sweet enchantment, nor chills one feeling of youthful joy. His criticisms, while they extend our insight into the causes of poetical excellence, teach us, at the same time, more keenly to enjoy, and more fondly to revere it."

LECTURES

ON THE

AGE OF ELIZABETH, &c.

LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY.

General View of the Subject.

The age of Elizabeth was distinguished, beyond, perhaps, any other in our history, by a number of great men, famous in different ways, and whose names have come down to us with unblemished honours; statesmen, warriors, divines, scholars, poets, and philosophers, Raleigh, Drake, Coke, Hooker, and higher and more sounding still, and still more frequent in our mouths, Shakspeare, Spenser, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, men whom fame has eternized in her long and lasting scroll, and who by their words and acts were benefactors of their country, and ornaments of human nature. Their attainments of different kinds bore the same general stamp, and was sterling: what they did had the mark of their age and country upon it. Perhaps the genius of Great Britain (if I may so speak without offence or flattery) never shone out fuller or brighter, or looked more like itself, than at this period. Our writers and great men had something in them that savoured of the soil from which they grew: they were not French, they were not Dutch, or German, or Greek, or Latin; they were truly English. They did not look out of themselves to see what they should be; they sought for truth and nature, and found it in themselves. There was no tinsel, and but little art; they were not the spoiled children of affectation and refinement, but a bold, vigorous, independent race of thinkers, with prodigious strength and energy, with none but

natural grace, and heartfelt, unobtrusive delicacy. They were not at all sophisticated. The mind of their country was great in them, and it prevailed. With their learning and unexampled acquirement they did not forget that they were men: with all their endeavours after excellence they did not lay aside the strong original bent and character of their minds. What they performed was chiefly nature's handiwork; and time has claimed it for his own.—To these, however, might be added others not less learned, nor with a scarce less happy vein, but less fortunate in the event, who, though as renowned in their day, have sunk into "mere oblivion," and of whom the only record (but that the noblest) is to be found in their works. Their works and their names, "poor, poor, dumb names," are all that remains of such men as Webster, Decker, Marston, Marlowe, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley! "How lov'd, how honour'd once avails them not:" though they were the friends and fellow-labourers of Shakspeare, sharing his fame and fortunes with him, the rivals of Jonson, and the masters of Beaumont and Fletcher's well-sung woes! They went out one by one unnoticed, like evening lights; or were swallowed up in the headlong torrent of puritanic zeal which succeeded, and swept away everything in its unsparing course, throwing up the wrecks of taste and genius at random, and at long fitful intervals, amidst the painted gewgaws and foreign frippery of the reign of Charles II., and from which we are only now recovering the scattered fragments and broken images to erect a temple to true Fame! How long before it will be completed?

If I can do anything to rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity, and to do them right, without prejudice to well deserved reputation, I shall have succeeded in what I chiefly propose. I shall not attempt, indeed, to adjust the spelling, or restore the pointing, as if the genius of poetry lay hid in errors of the press, but leaving these weightier matters of criticism to those who are more able and willing to bear the burden, try to bring out their real beauties to the eager sight, "draw the curtain of Time, and show the picture of Genius," restraining my own admiration within reasonable bounds.

There is not a lower ambition, a poorer way of thought, than

that which would confine all excellence, or arrogate its final accomplishment to the present, or modern times. We ordinarily speak and think of those who had the misfortune to write or live before us, as labouring under very singular privations and disadvantages in not having the benefit of those improvements which we have made, as buried in the grossest ignorance, or the slaves "of poring pedantry;" and we make a cheap and infallible estimate of their progress in civilization upon a graduated scale of perfectibility, calculated from the meridian of our own times. If we have pretty well got rid of the narrow bigotry that would limit all sense or virtue to our own country, and have fraternized, like true cosmopolites, with our neighbours and contemporaries, we have made our self-love amends by letting the generation we live in engross nearly all our admiration, and by pronouncing a sweeping sentence of barbarism and ignorance on our ancestry backwards, from the commencement (as near as can be) of the nineteenth, or the latter end of the eighteenth century. From thence we date a new era, the dawn of our own intellect, and that of the world, like "the sacred influence of light" glimmering on the confines of "Chaos and old night;" new manners rise, and all the cumbrous "pomp of elder days" vanishes, and is lost in worse than Gothic darkness. Pavilioned in the glittering pride of our superficial accomplishments and upstart pretensions, we fancy that everything beyond that magic circle is prejudice and error; and all, before the present enlightened period, but a dull and useless blank in the great map of time. We are so dazzled with the gloss and novelty of modern discoveries, that we cannot take into our mind's eye the vast expanse, the lengthened perspective of human intellect, and a cloud hangs over and conceals its loftiest monuments, if they are removed to a little distance from us—the cloud of our vanity and short-sightedness. The modern sciolist stultifies all understanding but his own, and that which he conceives like his own. We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago, and began then to think for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew anything till we did; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its lon

minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and look about it, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love. Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive, with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before, and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date—as if nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption. Because, in a word, the last generation, when tottering off the stage, were not so active, so sprightly, and so promising as we were, we begin to imagine that people formerly must have crawled about in a feeble, torpid state, like flies in winter, in a sort of dim twilight of the understanding; "nor can we think what thoughts they could conceive," in the absence of all those topics that so agreeably enliven and diversify our conversation and literature, mistaking the imperfection of our knowledge for the defect of their organs, as if it was necessary for us to have a register and certificate of their thoughts, or as if, because they did not see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and understand with our understandings, they could hear, see, and understand nothing. A falser inference could not be drawn, nor one more contrary to the maxims and cautions of a wise humanity. "Think," says Shakspeare, the prompter of good and true feelings, "there's livers out of Britain." So there have been thinkers, and great and sound ones, before our time. They had the same capacities that we have, sometimes greater motives for their exertion, and for the most part, the same subject-matter to work upon. What we learn from nature, we may hope to do as well as they; what we learn from them we may in general expect to do worse.—What is, I think, as likely as anything to cure us of this overweening admiration of the present, and unmingled contempt for past times, is the looking at the finest old pictures; at Raphael's heads, at Titian's faces, at Claude's landscapes. We have there the evidence of the senses, without the alterations of opinion or disguise of language. We there see the blood circulate through the veins (long before it was known that

t did so), the same red and white "by nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," the same thoughts passing through the mind and seated on the lips, the same blue sky, and glittering sunny vales, "where Pan, knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance, leads on the eternal spring." And we begin to feel that nature and the mind of man are not a thing of yesterday, as we had been led to suppose; and that "there are more things between heaven and earth than were ever dreamt of in our philosophy."—Or grant that we improve, in some respects, in a uniformly progressive ratio, and build, Babel-high, on the foundation of other men's knowledge, as in matters of science and speculative inquiry, where, by going often over the same general ground, certain general conclusions have been arrived at, and in the number of persons reasoning on a given subject, truth has at last been hit upon, and long-established error exploded; yet this does not apply to cases of individual power and knowledge, to a million of things besides, in which we are still to seek as much as ever, and in which we can only hope to find, by going to the fountain-head of thought and experience. We are quite wrong in supposing (as we are apt to do), that we can plead an exclusive title to wit and wisdom, to taste and genius, as the net produce and clear reversion of the age we live in, and that all we have to do to be great is to despise those who have gone before us as nothing.

Or even if we admit a saving clause in this sweeping proscription, and do not make the rule absolute, the very nature of the exception shows the spirit in which they are made. We single out one or two striking instances, say Shakspeare or Lord Bacon, which we would fain treat as prodigies, and as a marked contrast to the rudeness and barbarism that surrounded them. These we delight to dwell upon and magnify; the praise and wonder we heap upon their shrines are at the expense of the time in which they lived, and would leave it poor indeed. We make them out something more than human, "matchless, divine, what we will," so to make them no rule for their age, and no infringement of the abstract claim to superiority which we set up. Instead of letting them reflect any lustre, or add any credit to the period of history to which they rightfully belong,

we only make use of their example to insult and degrade it still more beneath our own level.

It is the present fashion to speak with veneration of old English literature; but the homage we pay to it is more akin to the rites of superstition than to the worship of true religion. Our faith is doubtful; our love cold; our knowledge little or none. We now and then repeat the names of some of the old writers by rote, but we are shy of looking into their works. Though we seem disposed to think highly of them, and to give them every credit for a masculine and original vein of thought, as a matter of literary courtesy and enlargement of taste, we are afraid of coming to the proof, as too great a trial of our candour and patience. We regard the enthusiastic admiration of these obsolete authors, or a desire to make proselytes to a belief in their extraordinary merits, as an amiable weakness, a pleasing delusion; and prepare to listen to some favourite passage, that may be referred to in support of this singular taste, with an incredulous smile; and are in no small pain for the result of the hazardous experiment; feeling much the same awkward condescending disposition to patronize these first crude attempts at poetry and lispings of the Muse, as when a fond parent brings forward a bashful child to make a display of its wit or learning. We hope the best, put a good face on the matter, but are sadly afraid the thing cannot answer.—Dr. Johnson said of these writers generally, that "they were sought after because they were scarce, and would not have been scarce had they been much esteemed." His decision is neither true history nor sound criticism. They were esteemed, and they deserved to be so.

One cause that might be pointed out here, as having contributed to the long-continued neglect of our earlier writers, lies in the very nature of our academic institutions, which unavoidably neutralizes a taste for the productions of native genius, estranges the mind from the history of our own literature, and makes it in each successive age like a book sealed. The Greek and Roman classics are a sort of privileged text-books, the standing order of the day, in a University education, and leave little leisure for a competent acquaintance with, or due admiration of, a whole host of able writers of our own, who are suffered to

moulder in obscurity on the shelves of our libraries, with a decent reservation of one or two top-names, that are cried up for form's sake, and to save the national character. Thus we keep a few of these always ready in capitals, and strike off the rest to prevent the tendency to a superfluous population in the republic of letters; in other words, to prevent the writers from becoming more numerous than the readers. The ancients are become effete in this respect, they no longer increase and multiply; or if they have imitators among us, no one is expected to read, and still less to admire them. It is not possible that the learned professors and the reading public should clash in this way, or necessary for them to use any precautions against each other. But it is not the same with the living languages, where there is danger of being overwhelmed by the crowd of competitors, and pedantry has combined with ignorance to cancel their unsatisfied claims.

We affect to wonder at Shakspeare, and one or two more of that period, as solitary instances upon record; whereas it is our own dearth of information that makes the waste; for there is no time more populous of intellect, or more prolific of intellectual wealth, than the one we are speaking of. Shakspeare did not look upon himself in this light, as a sort of monster of poetical genius, or on his contemporaries as "less than smallest dwarfs," when he speaks with true, not false modesty, of himself and them, and of his wayward thoughts, "desiring this man's art, and that man's scope." We fancy that there were no such men, that could either add to or take anything away from him, but such there were. He indeed overlooks and commands the admiration of posterity, but he does it from the *table-land* of the age in which he lived. He towered above his fellows, "in shape and gesture proudly eminent," but he was one of a race of giants, the tallest, the strongest, the most graceful, and beautiful of them; but it was a common and a noble brood. He was not something sacred and aloof from the vulgar herd of men, but shook hands with nature and the circumstances of the time, and is distinguished from his immediate contemporaries, not in kind, but in degree and greater variety of excellence. He did not form a class or species by himself, but belonged to a class or

species. His age was necessary to him; nor could he have been wrenched from his place in the edifice of which he was so conspicuous a part, without equal injury to himself and it. Mr. Wordsworth says of Milton, that "his soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." This cannot be said with any propriety of Shakspeare, who certainly moved in a constellation of bright luminaries, and "drew after him a third part of the heavens." If we allow, for argument's sake (or for truth's, which is better), that he was in himself equal to all his competitors put together; yet there was more dramatic excellence in that age than in the whole of the period that has elapsed since. If his contemporaries, with their united strength, would hardly make one Shakspeare, certain it is that all his successors would not make half a one. With the exception of a single writer, Otway, and of a single play of his ('Venice Preserved'), there is nobody in tragedy and dramatic poetry (I do not here speak of comedy), to be compared to the great men of the age of Shakspeare, and immediately after. They are a mighty phalanx of kindred spirits closing him round, moving in the same orbit, and impelled by the same causes in their whirling and eccentric career. They had the same faults and the same excellences; the same strength, and depth, and richness, the same truth of character, passion, imagination, thought and language, thrown, heaped, massed together without careful polishing or exact method, but poured out in unconcerned profusion from the lap of nature and genius in boundless and unrivalled magnificence. The sweetness of Decker, the thought of Marston, the gravity of Chapman, the grace of Fletcher and his young-eyed wit, Jonson's learned sock, the flowing vein of Middleton, Heywood's ease, the pathos of Webster, and Marlowe's deep designs, add a double lustre to the sweetness, thought, gravity, grace, wit, artless nature, copiousness, ease, pathos, and sublime conceptions of Shakspeare's Muse. They are indeed the scale by which we can best ascend to the true knowledge and love of him. Our admiration of them does not lessen our relish for him: but, on the contrary, increases and confirms it. For such an extraordinary combination and development of fancy and genius many causes may be assigned, and we seek for the chief of them in religion, in politics, in the

circumstances of the time, the recent diffusion of letters, in local situation, and in the character of the men who adorned that period, and availed themselves so nobly of the advantages placed within their reach.

I shall here attempt to give a general sketch of these causes, and of the manner in which they operated to mould and stamp the poetry of the country at the period of which I have to treat; independently of incidental and fortuitous causes, for which there is no accounting, but which, after all, have often the greatest share in determining the most important results.

The first cause I shall mention, as contributing to this general effect, was the Reformation, which had just then taken place. This event gave a mighty impulse, and increased activity to thought and inquiry, and agitated the inert mass of accumulated prejudices throughout Europe. The effect of the concussion was general, but the shock was greatest in this country. It toppled down the full-grown, intolerable abuses of centuries at a blow; heaved the ground from under the feet of bigoted faith and slavish obedience; and the roar and dashing of opinions, loosened from their accustomed hold, might be heard like the noise of an angry sea, and has never yet subsided. Germany first broke the spell of misbegotten fear, and gave the watchword; but England joined the shout, and echoed it back with her island voice from her thousand cliffs and craggy shores, in a longer and a louder strain. With that cry the genius of Great Britain rose and threw down the gauntlet to the nations. There was a mighty fermentation: the waters were out; public opinion was in a state of projection. Liberty was held out to all to think and speak the truth. Men's brains were busy; their spirits stirring; their hearts full; and their hands not idle. Their eyes were open to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free. The death-blow which had been struck at scarlet vice and bloated hypocrisy loosened their tongues, and made the talismans and love-tokens of Popish superstition, with which she had beguiled her followers and committed abominations with the people, fall harmless from their necks.

The translation of the Bible was the chief engine in the great

work. It threw open, by a secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality, which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets, and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers (such they were thought) to the meanest of the people. It gave them a common interest in the common cause. Their hearts burnt within them as they read. It gave a *mind* to the people, by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment: it created endless diversity and collision of opinion. They found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive in the magnitude of the consequences attached to them, to exert the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it. Religious controversy sharpens the understanding by the subtlety and remoteness of the topics it discusses, and braces the will by their infinite importance. We perceive in the history of this period a nervous masculine intellect. No levity, no feebleness, no indifference; or if there were, it is a relaxation from the intense activity which gives a tone to its general character. But there is a gravity approaching to piety a seriousness of impression, a conscientious severity of argument, an habitual fervour and enthusiasm in their mode of handling almost every subject. The debates of the schoolmen were sharp and subtle enough; but they wanted interest and grandeur, and were, besides, confined to a few: they did not affect the general mass of the community. But the Bible was thrown open to all ranks and conditions "to run and read," with its wonderful table of contents from Genesis to the Revelations. Every village in England would present the scene so well described in Burns's Cotter's Saturday Night. I cannot think that all this variety and weight of knowledge could be thrown in all at once upon the mind of a people, and not make some impression upon it, the traces of which might be discerned in the manners and literature of the age. For, to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, or the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of rivetting sympathy. We see what Milton has made of the account of the Creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated

with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or what is there equal (in that romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity which goes to the heart of a country, and rouses it, as it were, from its lair in wastes and wildnesses) to the story of Joseph and his Brethren, of Rachael and Laban, of Jacob's Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the account of their captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of the Scripture, and numberless more of the same kind, to pass over the Orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel, an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel must be made of no "penetrable stuff." There is something in the character of Christ too (leaving religious faith quite out of the question) of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by the contemplation of its idea alone, than any to be found in history, whether actual or feigned. This character is that of a sublime humanity, such as was never seen on earth before nor since. This shone manifestly both in his words and actions. We see it in his washing the disciples' feet the night before his death, that unspeakable instance of humility and love, "above all art, all meanness, and all pride;" and in the leave he took of them on that occasion, "My peace I give unto you: that peace which the world cannot give, give I unto you;" and in his last commandment, that "they should love one another." Who can read the account of his behaviour on the cross, when turning to his mother he said, "Woman, behold thy son," and to the disciple John, "Behold thy mother," and "from that hour that disciple took her to his own home," without having his heart smote within him? We see it in his treatment of the woman taken in adultery, and in his excuse for the woman who poured precious ointment on his garment as an offering of devotion and love, which is here all in all. His religion was the religion of the heart. We see it in his discourse with the disciples as they walked together towards Emmaus, when their hearts burned within them; in his sermon from the Mount, in his parable of the good Samaritan, and in that of the Prodigal Son—in

every act and word of his life, a grace, a mildness, a dignity of love, a patience and wisdom worthy of the Son of God. His whole life and being were imbued, steeped in this word, *charity;* it was the spring, the well-head from which every thought and feeling gushed into act; and it was this that breathed a mild glory from his face in that last agony upon the cross, "when the meek Saviour bowed his head and died," praying for his enemies. He was the first true teacher of morality; for he alone conceived the idea of a pure humanity. He redeemed man from the worship of that idol, self, and instructed him by precept and example to love his neighbour as himself, to forgive our enemies, to do good to those that curse us and despitefully use us. He taught the love of good for the sake of good, without regard to personal or sinister views, and made the affections of the heart the sole seat of morality, instead of the pride of the understanding or the sternness of the will. In answering the question, "who is our neighbour?" as one who stands in need of our assistance, and whose wounds we can bind up, he has done more to humanize the thoughts and tame the unruly passions, than all who have tried to reform and benefit mankind. The very idea of abstract benevolence, of the desire to do good because another wants our services, and of regarding the human race as one family, the offspring of one common parent, is hardly to be found in any other code or system. It was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The Greeks and Romans never thought of considering others, but as they were Greeks or Romans, as they were bound to them by certain positive ties, or, on the other hand, as separated from them by fiercer antipathies. Their virtues were the virtues of political machines, their vices were the vices of demons, ready to inflict or endure pain with obdurate and remorseless inflexibility of purpose. But in the Christian religion, "we perceive a softness coming over the heart of a nation, and the iron scales that fence and harden it, melt and drop off." It becomes malleable, capable of pity, of forgiveness, of relaxing in its claims, and remitting its power. We strike it, and it does not hurt us: it is not steel or marble, but flesh and blood, clay tempered with tears, and "soft as sinews of the new-born babe." The gospel

was first preached to the poor, for it consulted their wants and interests, not its own pride and arrogance. It first promulgated the equality of mankind in the community of duties and benefits. It denounced the iniquities of the chief priests and pharisees, and declared itself at variance with principalities and powers, for it sympathizes not with the oppressor, but the oppressed. It first abolished slavery, for it did not consider the power of the will to inflict injury, as clothing it with a right to do so. Its law is good, not power. It at the same time tended to wean the mind from the grossness of sense, and a particle of its divine flame was lent to brighten and purify the lamp of love!

There have been persons who, being sceptics as to the divine mission of Christ, have taken an accountable prejudice to his doctrines, and have been disposed to deny the merit of his character; but this was not the feeling of the great men in the age of Elizabeth (whatever might be their belief,) one of whom says of him, with a boldness equal to its piety:

> "The best of men
> That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer;
> A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit;
> The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

This was old honest Decker, and the lines ought to embalm his memory to every one who has a sense either of religion, or philosophy, or humanity, or true genius. Nor can I help thinking, that we may discern the traces of the influence exerted by religious faith in the spirit of the poetry of the age of Elizabeth, in the means of exciting terror and pity, in the delineation of the passions of grief, remorse, love, sympathy, the sense of shame, in the fond desires, the longings after immortality, in the heaven of hope, and the abyss of despair it lays open before us.*

The literature of this age, then, I would say, was strongly influenced (among other causes,) first by the spirit of Christianity, and secondly, by the spirit of Protestantism.

The effects of the Reformation on politics and philosophy may

* In some Roman Catholic countries, pictures in part supplied the place of the translation of the Bible: and this dumb art arose in the silence of the written oracles

be seen in the writings and history of the next and of the following ages. They are still at work, and will continue to be so. The effects on the poetry of the time were chiefly confined to the moulding of the character, and giving a powerful impulse to the intellect of the country. The immediate use or application that was made of religion to subjects of imagination and fiction was not (from an obvious ground of separation) so direct or frequent, as that which was made of the classical and romantic literature.

For, much about the same time, the rich and fascinating stores of the Greek and Roman mythology, and those of the romantic poetry of Spain and Italy, were eagerly explored by the curious, and thrown open in translations to the admiring gaze of the vulgar. This last circumstance could hardly have afforded so much advantage to the poets of that day, who were themselves, in fact, the translators, as it shows the general curiosity and increasing interest in such subjects, as a prevailing feature of the times. There were translations of Tasso by Fairfax, and of Ariosto by Harrington, of Homer and Hesiod by Chapman, and of Virgil long before, and Ovid soon after; there was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, of which Shakspeare has made such admirable use in his Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar; and Ben Jonson's tragedies of Catiline and Sejanus may themselves be considered as almost literal translations into verse, of Tacitus, Sallust, and Cicero's Orations in his consulship. Boccacio, the divine Boccacio, Petrarch, Dante, the satirist Aretine, Machiavel, Castiglione, and others, were familiar to our writers, and they make occasional mention of some few French authors, as Ronsard and Du Bartas; for the French literature had not at this stage arrived at its Augustan period, and it was the imitation of their literature a century afterwards, when it had arrived at its greatest height (itself copied from the Greek and Latin,) that enfeebled and impoverished our own. But of the time that we are considering, it might be said, without much extravagance that every breath that blew, every wave that rolled to our shores, brought with it some accession to our knowledge, which was engrafted on the national genius. In fact, all the disposable materials that had been accumulating for a long period of time, either in our own or in foreign countries, were now brought

together, and required nothing more than to be wrought up, polished, or arranged in striking forms, for ornament and use. To this every inducement prompted ; the novelty of the acquisition of knowledge in many cases, the emulation of foreign wits, and of immortal works, the want and the expectation of such works among ourselves, the opportunity and encouragement afforded for their production by leisure and affluence ; and, above all, the insatiable desire of the mind to beget its own image, and to construct out of itself, and for the delight and admiration of the world and posterity, that excellence of which the idea exists hitherto only in its own breast, and the impression of which it would make as universal as the eye of heaven, the benefit as common as the air we breathe. The first impulse of genius is to create what never existed before: the contemplation of that which is so created, is sufficient to satisfy the demands of taste ; and it is the habitual study and imitation of the original models that takes away the power, and even wish to do the like. Taste limps after genius, and from copying the artificial models, we lose sight of the living principle of nature. It is the effort we make, and the impulse we acquire, in overcoming the first obstacles, that projects us forward ; it is the necessity for exertion that makes us conscious of our strength ; but this necessity and this impulse once removed, the tide of fancy and enthusiasm, which is at first a running stream, soon settles and crusts into the standing pool of dulness, criticism, and *virtu*.

What also gave an unusual *impetus* to the mind of man at this period, was the discovery of the New World, and the reading of voyages and travels. Green islands and golden sands seemed to arise, as by enchantment, out of the bosom of the watery waste, and invite the cupidity, or wing the imagination of the dreaming speculator. Fairy land was realized in new and unknown worlds. "Fortunate fields and groves and flowery vales, thrice happy isles," were found floating "like those Hesperian gardens famed of old," beyond Atlantic seas, as dropt from the zenith. The people, the soil, the clime, every thing gave unlimited scope to the curiosity of the traveller and reader. Other manners might be said to enlarge the bounds of knowledge, and new mines of wealth were tumbled at our feet It is from a voyage

to the Straits of Magellan that Shakspeare has taken the hint of Prospero's Enchanted Island, and of the savage Caliban with his god Setebos.* Spenser seems to have had the same feeling in his mind in the production of his Faery Queen, and vindicates his poetic fiction on this very ground of analogy.

" Right well I wote, most mighty sovereign,
That all this famous antique history
Of some the abundance of an idle brain
Will judged be, and painted forgery,
Rather than matter of just memory:
Since none that breatheth living air, doth know
Where is that happy land of faery
Which I so much do vaunt, but nowhere show,
But vouch antiquities which nobody can know.

But let that man with better sense avise,
That of the world least part to us is read:
And daily how through hardy enterprize
Many great regions are discovered,
Which to late age were never mentioned.
Who ever heard of the Indian Peru?
Or who in venturous vessel measured
The Amazon's huge river, now found true?
Or fruitfullest Virginia who did ever view?

Yet all these where when no man did them know,
Yet have from wisest ages hidden been:
And later times things more unknown shall show.
Why then should witless man so much misween
That nothing is but that which he hath seen?
What, if within the moon's fair shining sphere,
What, if in every other star unseen,
Of other worlds he happily should hear?
He wonder would much more; yet such to some appear."

Fancy's air-drawn pictures after history's waking dream showed like clouds over mountains; and from the romance of real life to the idlest fiction, the transition seemed easy. Shakspeare, as well as others of his time, availed himself of the old Chronicles, and of the traditions or fabulous inventions contained in them in such ample measure, and which had not yet been appropriated to the purposes of poetry or the drama. The stage

* See a Voyage to the Straits of Magellan, 1594.

was a new thing; and those who had to supply its demands laid their hands upon whatever came within their reach: they were not particular as to the means, so that they gained the end. Lear is founded upon an old ballad; Othello on an Italian novel; Hamlet on a Danish, and Macbeth on a Scotch tradition: one of which is to be found in Saxo-Grammaticus, and the last in Hollingshed. The Ghost-scenes and the Witches in each, are authenticated in the old Gothic history. There was also this connecting link between the poetry of this age and the supernatural traditions of a former one, that the belief in them was still extant, and in full force and visible operation among the vulgar (to say no more, in the time of our authors. The appalling and wild chimeras of superstition and ignorance, "those bodiless creations that ecstacy is very cunning in," were inwoven with existing manners and opinions, and all their effects on the passions of terror or pity might be gathered from common and actual observation—might be discerned in the workings of the face, the expressions of the tongue, the writhings of a troubled conscience. "Your face, my Thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters." Midnight and secret murders, too, from the imperfect state of the police, were more common; and the ferocious and brutal manners that would stamp the brow of the hardened ruffian or hired assassin, more incorrigible and undisguised. The portraits of Tyrrel and Forrest were, no doubt, done from the life. We find that the ravages of the plague, the destructive rage of fire, the poisoned chalice, lean famine, the serpent's mortal sting, and the fury of wild beasts, were the common topics of their poetry, as they were common occurrences in more remote periods of history. They were the strong ingredients thrown into the cauldron of tragedy to make it "thick and slab." Man's life was (as it appears to me) more full of traps and pit-falls; of hair-breadth accidents by flood and field; more way-laid by sudden and startling evils; it trod on the brink of hope and fear; stumbled upon fate unawares; while the imagination, close behind it, caught at and clung to the shape of danger, or "snatched a wild and fearful joy" from its escape. The accidents of nature were less provided against; the excesses of the passions and of lawless power were less regulated, and produced more strange

and desperate catastrophes. The tales of Boccacio are founded on the great pestilence of Florence; Fletcher the poet died of the plague, and Marlowe was stabbed in a tavern quarrel. The strict authority of parents, the inequality of ranks, or the hereditary feuds between different families, made more unhappy loves or matches.

"The course of true love never did run smooth."

Again, the heroic and martial spirit which breathes in our elder writers, was yet in considerable activity in the reign of Elizabeth. "The age of chivalry was not then quite gone, nor the glory of Europe extinguished for ever." Jousts and tournaments were still common with the nobility in England and in foreign countries. Sir Philip Sidney was particularly distinguished for his proficiency in these exercises (and indeed fell a martyr to his ambition as a soldier)—and the gentle Surrey was still more famous, on the same account, just before him. It is true, the general use of fire-arms gradually superseded the necessity of skill in the sword, or bravery in the person: and we find many symptoms of the rapid degeneracy in this respect. It was comparatively an age of peace,

"Like strength reposing on his own right arm;"

but the sound of civil combat might still be heard in the distance, the spear glittered to the eye of memory, or the clashing of armour struck on the imagination of the ardent and the young. They were borderers on the savage state, on the times of war and bigotry, though in the lap of arts, of luxury, and knowledge. They stood on the shore and saw the billows rolling after the storm: "they heard the tumult, and were still." The manners and out-of-door amusements were more tinctured with a spirit of adventure and romance. The war with wild beasts, &c., was more strenuously kept up in country sports. I do not think we could get from sedentary poets, who had never mingled in the vicissitudes, the dangers, or excitements of the chase, such descriptions of hunting and other athletic games, as are to be found in Shakspeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, or Fletcher's Noble Kinsmen.

With respect to the good cheer and hospitable living of those times, I cannot agree with an ingenious and agreeable writer of the present day, that it was general or frequent. The very stress laid upon certain holidays and festivals, shows that they did not keep up the same Saturnalian license and open-house all the year round. They reserved themselves for great occasions, and made the best amends they could for a year of abstinence and toil by a week of merriment and convivial indulgence. Persons in middle life at this day, who can afford a good dinner every day, do not look forward to it as any particular subject of exultation: the poor peasant, who can only contrive to treat himself to a joint of meat on a Sunday, considers it as an event in the week. So, in the old Cambridge comedy of the Returne from Parnassus, we find this indignant description of the progress of luxury in those days, put into the mouth of one of the speakers:

> "Why is't not strange to see a ragged clerke,
> Some stammell weaver, or some butcher's sonne,
> That scrubb'd a late within a sleeveless gowne,
> When the commencement, like a morrice dance,
> Hath put a bell or two about his legges,
> Created him a sweet cleane gentleman:
> How then he 'gins to follow fashions.
> He whose thin sire dwelt in a smokye roofe,
> Must take tobacco, and must wear a locke.
> His thirsty dad drinks in a wooden bowle,
> But his sweet self is served in silver plate.
> His hungry sire will scrape you twenty legges
> For one good Christmas meal on new-year's day,
> But his mawe must be capon cramm'd each day."
>
> *Act III, Scene* 2.

This does not look as if in those days "it snowed of meat and think," as a matter of course throughout the year! The distinctions of dress, the badges of different professions, the very signs of the shops, which we have set aside for written inscriptions over the doors, were, as Mr. Lamb observes, a sort of visible language to the imagination, and hints for thought. Like the costumes of different foreign nations, they had an immediate striking and picturesque effect, giving scope to the fancy. The surface of society was embossed with hieroglyphics, and poetry

existed "in act and complement extern." The poetry of former times might be directly taken from real life, as our poetry is taken from the poetry of former times. Finally, the face of nature, which was the same glorious object then that it is now, was open to them; and coming first, they gathered her fairest flowers to live for ever in their verse—the movements of the human heart were not hid from them, for they had the same passions as we, only less disguised, and less subject to control. Decker has given an admirable description of a mad-house in one of his plays. But it might be perhaps objected, that it was only a literal account taken from Bedlam at that time: and it might be answered, that the old poets took the same methods of describing the passions and fancies of men whom they met at large, which forms the point of communion between us; for the title of the old play, 'A Mad World, my Masters,' is hardly yet obsolete; and we are pretty much the same Bedlam still, perhaps a little better managed, like the real one, and with more care and humanity shown to the patients!

Lastly, to conclude this account; what gave a unity and common direction to all these causes, was the natural genius of the country, which was strong in these writers in proportion to their strength. We are a nation of islanders, and we cannot help it; nor mend ourselves if we would. We are something in ourselves, nothing when we try to ape others. Music and painting are not our *forte:* for what we have done in that way has been little, and that borrowed from others with great difficulty. But we may boast of our poets and philosophers. That's something. We have had strong heads and sound hearts among us. Thrown on one side of the world, and left to bustle for ourselves, we have fought out many a battle for truth and freedom. That is our natural style; and it were to be wished we had in no instance departed from it. Our situation has given us a certain cast of thought and character; and our liberty has enabled us to make the most of it. We are of a stiff clay, not moulded into every fashion, with stubborn joints not easily bent. We are slow to think, and therefore impressions do not work upon us till they act in masses. We are not forward to express our feelings, and therefore they do not come from us till they force their way in

the most impetuous eloquence. Our language is, as it were, to begin anew, and we make use of the most singular and boldest combinations to explain ourselves. Our wit comes from us, "like birdlime, brains and all." We pay too little attention to form and method, leave our works in an unfinished state, but still the materials we work in are solid and of nature's mint; we do not deal in counterfeits. We both under and over-do, but we keep an eye to the prominent features, the main chance. We are more for weight than show; care only about what interests ourselves, instead of trying to impose upon others by plausible appearances, and are obstinate and intractable in not conforming to common rules, by which many arrive at their ends with half the real waste of thought and trouble. We neglect all but the principal object, gather our force to make a great blow, bring it down, and relapse into sluggishness and indifference again. *Materiam superabat opus*, cannot be said of us. We may be accused of grossness, but not of flimsiness; of extravagance, but not of affectation; of want of art and refinement, but not of a want of truth and nature. Our literature, in a word, is Gothic and grotesque; unequal and irregular; not cast in a previous mould, nor of one uniform texture, but of great weight in the whole, and of incomparable value in the best parts. It aims at an excess of beauty or power, hits or misses, and is either very good indeed, or absolutely good for nothing. This character applies in particular to our literature in the age of Elizabeth, which is its best period, before the introduction of a rage for French rules and French models; for whatever may be the value of our own original style of composition, there can be neither offence nor presumption in saying, that it is at least better than our second-hand imitations of others. Our understanding (such as it is and must remain, to be good for anything) is not a thoroughfare for common places, smooth as the palm of one's hand, but full of knotty points and jutting excrescences, rough, uneven, overgrown with brambles; and I like this aspect of the mind (as some one said of the country), where nature keeps a good deal of the soil in her own hands. Perhaps the genius of our poetry has more of Pan than of Apollo; "but Pan is a God, Apollo is no more!"

LECTURE II.

On the Dramatic Writers contemporary with Shakspeare, Lyly, Marlowe, Heywood, Middleton, and Rowley.

The period of which I shall have to treat (from the Reformation to the middle of Charles I.) was prolific in dramatic excellence even more than in any other. In approaching it, we seem to be approaching the RICH STRAND described in Spenser, where treasures of all kinds lay scattered, or rather crowded together on the shore in inexhaustible but unregarded profusion, "rich as the oozy bottom of the deep in sunken wrack and sumless treasuries." We are confounded with the variety, and dazzled with the dusky splendour of names sacred in their obscurity, and works gorgeous in their decay, "majestic, though in ruin," like Guyon when he entered the Cave of Mammon, and was shown the massy pillars and huge unwieldy fragments of gold, covered with dust and cobwebs, and shedding a faint shadow of uncertain light,

> "Such as a lamp whose light doth fade away
> Or as the moon clothed with cloudy night
> Doth show to him that walks in fear and sad affright."

The dramatic literature of this period only wants exploring, to fill the inquiring mind with wonder and delight, and to convince us that we have been wrong in lavishing all our praise on "new-born gauds, though they are made and moulded of things past;" and in "giving to dust, that is a little gilt, more laud than gilt o'er-dusted." In short, the discovery of such an unsuspected and forgotten mine of wealth will be found amply to repay the labour of the search, and it will be hard if in most cases curiosity does not end in admiration, and modesty teach us wisdom. A few of the most singular productions of these times remain unclaimed; of others, the authors are uncertain; many of them

are joint productions of different pens; but of the best the writers' names are in general known, and obviously stamped on the productions themselves. The names of Ben Jonson, for instance, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, are almost, though not quite, as familiar to us as that of Shakspeare; and their works still keep regular possession of the stage. Another set of writers included in the same general period (the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century,) who are next, or equal, or sometimes superior to these in power, but whose names are now little known, and their writings nearly obsolete, are Lyly, Marlowe, Marston, Chapman, Middleton, and Rowley, Heywood, Webster, Decker, and Ford. I shall devote the present and two following Lectures to the best account I can give of these, and shall begin with some of the least known.

The earliest tragedy of which I shall take notice (I believe the earliest that we have) is that of Ferrex and Porrex, or Gorboduc (as it has been generally called,) the production of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards created Earl of Dorset, assisted by one Thomas Norton. This was first acted with applause before the Queen in 1561, the noble author being then quite a young man. This tragedy being considered as the first in our language, is certainly a curiosity, and in other respects it is also remarkable; though, perhaps, enough has been said about it. As a work of genius, it may be set down as nothing, for it contains hardly a memorable line or passage; as a work of art, and the first of its kind attempted in the language, it may be considered as a monument of the taste and skill of the authors. Its merit is confined to the regularity of the plot and metre, to its general good sense, and strict attention to common decorum. If the poet has not stamped the peculiar genius of his age upon this first attempt, it is no inconsiderable proof of strength of mind and conception sustained by its own sense of propriety alone, to have so far anticipated the taste of succeeding times as to have avoided any glaring offence against rules and models, which had no existence in his day. Or perhaps a truer solution might be, that there were as yet no examples of a more ambiguous and irregular kind to tempt him to err, and as he had not the impulse of

resources within himself to strike out a new path, he merely adhered with modesty and caution to the classical models with which, as a scholar, he was well acquainted. The language of the dialogue is clear, unaffected, and intelligible without the smallest difficulty, even to this day; it has "no figures nor no fantasies," to which the most fastidious critic can object, but the dramatic power is nearly none at all. It is written expressly to set forth the dangers and mischiefs that arise from the division of sovereign power; and the several speakers dilate upon the different views of the subject in turn, like clever school-boys set to compose a thesis, or declaim upon the fatal consequences of ambition, and the uncertainty of human affairs. The author, in the end, declares for the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; a doctrine which indeed was seldom questioned at that time of day. Eubulus, one of the old king's counsellors thus gives his opinion—

> "Eke fully with the duke my mind agrees,
> That no cause serves, whereby the subject may
> Call to account the doings of his prince;
> Much less in blood by sword to work revenge:
> No more than may the hand cut off the head.
> In act nor speech, no nor in secret thought,
> The subject may rebel against his lord,
> Or judge of him that sits in Cæsar's seat,
> With grudging mind to damn those he mislikes.
> Though kings forget to govern as they ought,
> Yet subjects must obey as they are bound."

Yet how little he was borne out in this inference by the unbiassed dictates of his own mind, may appear from the freedom and unguarded boldness of such lines as the following, addressed by a favourite to a prince, as courtly advice:

> "Know ye that lust of kingdoms hath no law:
> The gods do bear and will allow in kings
> The things that they abhor in rascal routs.
> When kings on slender quarrels run to wars,
> And then in cruel and unkindly wise
> Command thefts, rapes, murder of innocents,
> The spoil of towns, ruins of mighty realms;
> Think you such princes do suppose themselves

Subject to laws of kind and fear of gods?
Murders and violent thefts in private men
Are heinous crimes, and full of foul reproach;
Yet none offence, but deck'd with noble name
Of glorious conquests in the hands of kings."

The principal characters make as many invocations to the names of their children, their country, and their friends, as Cicero in his Orations, and all the topics insisted upon are open, direct, urged in the face of day, with no more attention to time or place, to an enemy who overhears, or an accomplice to whom they are addressed; in a word, with no more dramatic insinuations or bye-play than the pleadings in a court of law. Almost the only passage that I can instance, as rising above this didactic tone of mediocrity into the pathos of poetry, is one where Marcella laments the untimely death of her lover, Ferrex:

"Ah! noble prince, how oft have I beheld
Thee mounted on thy fierce and trampling steed,
Shining in armour bright before the tilt
And with thy mistress' sleeve tied on thy helm,
And charge thy staff to please thy lady's eye.
That bowed the head-piece of thy friendly foe!
How oft in arms on horse to bend the mace,
How oft in arms on foot to break the sword,
Which never now these eyes may see again!"

There seems a reference to Chaucer in the wording of the following lines—

"Then saw I how he smiled with slaying knife
Wrapp'd under cloke, then saw I deep deceit
Lurk in his face, and death prepared for me."*

Sir Philip Sidney says of this tragedy: "Gorboduc is full of stately speeches, and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality; which it doth most delightfully teach, and thereby obtain the very end of poetry." And Mr. Pope, whose taste in such matters was very different from Sir Philip Sidney's, says in still

* "The smiler with the knife under his cloke."—*Knight's Tale.*

stronger terms: "That the writers of the succeeding age might have improved as much in other respects, by copying from him a propriety in the sentiments, an unaffected perspicuity of style, and an easy flow in the numbers. In a word, that chastity, correctness, and gravity of style, which are so essential to tragedy, and which all the tragic poets who followed, not excepting Shakspeare himself, either little understood, or perpetually neglected." It was well for us and them that they did so!

The Induction to the Mirrour for Magistrates does his muse more credit. It sometimes reminds one of Chaucer, and at others seems like an anticipation, in some degree, both of the measure and manner of Spenser. The following stanzas may give the reader an idea of the merit of this old poem, which was published in 1563:

"By him lay heauie Sleepe cosin of Death
Flat on the ground, and still as any stone,
A very corps, saue yeelding foith a breath.
Small keepe tooke he whom Fortune frowned on,
Or whom she lifted vp into the throne
Of high renowne, but as a liuing death,
So dead aliue, of life he drew the breath.

The bodies rest, the quiet of the hart,
The trauiles ease, the still nights feere was he.
And of our life in earth the better part,
Reuer of sight, and in whom we see
Things oft that tide, and oft that neuer bee.
Without respect esteeming equally
King *Cræsus* pompe, and *Irus* pouertie.

And next in order sad Old Age we found,
His beard all hoare, his eyes hollow and blind,
With drouping cheere still poring on the ground,
As on the place where nature him assign'd
To rest, when that the sister's had vntwin'd
His vitall thred, and ended with their knife
The fleeting course of fast declining life.

There heard we him with broke and hollow plaint
Rew with himselfe his end approaching fast,
And all for nought his wretched mind torment,
With sweete remembrance of his pleasures past,
And fresh delites of lustie youth forewast.

Recounting which, how would he sob and shreek ?
And to be young againe of *Ioue* besecke.

But and the cruell fates so fixed be,
That time forepast cannot returne againe,
This one request of *Ioue* yet prayed he:
That in such withred plight, and wretched paine,
As *Eld* (accompanied with lothsome traine)
Had brought on him, all were it woe and griefe,
He might a while yet linger forth his life.

And not so soone descend into the pit;
Where Death, when he the mortall corps hath slaine,
With wretchlesse hand in graue doth couer it,
Thereafter neuer to enjoy againe
The gladsome light, but in the ground ylaine,
In depth of darknesse waste and weare to nought,
As he had nere into the world been brought.

But who had seene him, sobbing how he stood
Vnto himselfe, and how he would bemone
His youth forepast, as though it wrought him good
To talk of youth, all were his youth forgone,
He would haue mused and maruail'd much whereon
This wretched Age should life desire so faine,
And knowes ful wel life doth but length his paine.

Crookebackt he was, toothshaken, and blere eyed,
Went on three feete, and sometime crept on foure,
With old lame bones, that ratled by his side,
His scalpe all pil'd, and he with eld forelore:
His withred first still knocking at Death's dore,
Fumbling and driueling as he draws his breath,
For briefe, the shape and messenger of Death."

John Lyly (born in the Weald of Kent about the year 1553), was the author of Midas and Endymion, of Alexander and Campaspe, and of the comedy of Mother Bombie. Of the last it may be said, that it is very much what its name would import, old, quaint, and vulgar.—I may here observe, once for all, that I would not be understood to say, that the age of Elizabeth was all of gold without any alloy. there was both gold and lead in it, and often in one and the same writer. In our impatience to form an opinion, we conclude, when we first meet with a good thing, that it is owing to the age; or, if we meet with a bad one

it is characteristic of the age, when, in fact, it is neither; for there are good and bad in almost all ages, and one age excels in one thing, another in another—only one age may excel more and in higher things than another, but none can excel equally and completely in all. The writers of Elizabeth, as poets, soared to the height they did by indulging their own unrestrained enthusiasm; as comic writers they chiefly copied the manners of the age, which did not give them the same advantages over their successors. Lyly's comedy, for instance, is "poor, unfledged, has never winged from view o' th' nest," and tries in vain to rise above the ground with crude conceits and clumsy levity. Lydia, the heroine of the piece, is silly enough, if the rest were but as witty. But the author has shown no partiality in the distribution of his gifts. To say the truth, it was a very common fault of the old comedy, that its humours were too low, and the weaknesses exposed too great to be credible, or an object of ridicule, even if they were. The affectation of their courtiers is passable, and diverting as a contrast to present manners; but the eccentricities of their clowns are "very tolerable, and not to be endured." Any kind of activity of mind might seem to the writers better than none: any nonsense served to amuse their hearers; any cant phrase, any coarse allusion, any pompous absurdity, was taken for wit and drollery. Nothing could be too mean, too foolish, too improbable, or too offensive, to be a proper subject for laughter. Any one (looking hastily at this side of the question only) might be tempted to suppose the youngest children of Thespis a very callow brood, chirping their slender notes, or silly swains "grating their lean and flashy jests on scrannel pipes of wretched straw." The genius of comedy looked too often like a lean and hectic pantaloon; love was a slip-shod shepherdess; wit a parti-coloured fool like harlequin, and the plot came hobbling like a clown after all. A string of impertinent and farcical jests (or rather blunders), was with great formality ushered into the world as "a right pleasant and conceited comedy." Comedy could not descend lower than it sometimes did, without glancing at physical imperfections and deformity. The two young persons in the play before us, on whom the event of the plot chiefly hinges, do in fact turn out to

be no better than changelings and natural idiots. This is carrying innocence and simplicity too far. So again, the character of Sir Tophas in Endymion, an affected, blustering, talkative, cowardly pretender, treads too near upon blank stupidity and downright want of common sense to be admissible as a butt for satire. Shakspeare has contrived to clothe the lamentable nakedness of the same sort of character with a motley garb from the wardrobe of his imagination, and has redeemed it from insipidity by a certain plausibility of speech and playful extravagance of humour. But the undertaking was nearly desperate. Ben Jonson tried to overcome the difficulty by the force of learning and study; and thought to gain his end by persisting in error; but he only made matters worse, for his clowns and coxcombs (if we except Bobadil) are the most incorrigible and insufferable of all others.—The story of Mother Bombie is little else than a tissue of absurd mistakes, arising from the confusion of the different characters one with another, like another Comedy of Errors, and ends in their being (most of them) married in a game at cross-purposes to the persons they particularly dislike.

To leave this, and proceed to something pleasanter, Midas and Endymion, which are worthy of their names and of the subject. The story in both is classical, and the execution is for the most part elegant and simple. There is often something that reminds one of the graceful communicativeness of Lucian or of Apuleius, from whom one of the stories is borrowed. Lyly made a more attractive picture of Grecian manners at second-hand, than of English characters from his own observation. The poet (which is the great merit of a poet in such a subject) has transported himself to the scene of action, to ancient Greece or Asia Minor; the manners, the images, the traditions are preserved with truth and delicacy, and the dialogue (to my fancy) glides and sparkles like a clear stream from the Muses' spring. I know few things more perfect in characteristic painting, than the exclamation of the Phrygian shepherds, who, afraid of betraying the secret of Midas's ears, fancy that "the very reeds bow down, as though they listened to their talk;" nor more affecting in sentiment than the apostrophe addressed by his friend Eumenides to Endymion, on waking from his long sleep: "Behold, the twig to which thou

laidest down thy head is now become a tree." The narrative is sometimes a little wandering and desultory; but if it had been ten times as tedious, this thought would have redeemed it; for I cannot conceive of anything more beautiful, more simple, or touching, than this exquisitely chosen image and dumb proof of the manner in which he passed his life, from youth to old age, in a dream, a dream of love. Happy Endymion! Faithful Eumenides! Divine Cynthia! Who would not wish to pass his life in such a sleep, a long, long sleep, dreaming of some fair heavenly Goddess, with the moon shining upon his face and the trees growing silently over his head!—There is something in this story which has taken a strange hold of my fancy, perhaps "out of my weakness and my melancholy;" but for the satisfaction of the reader I will quote the whole passage:—"It is silly sooth, and dallies with the innocence of love like the old age."

"*Cynthia.* Well, let us to Endymion. I will not be so stately (good Endymion) not to stoop to do thee good; and if thy liberty consist in a kiss from me, thou shalt have it. And although my mouth hath been heretofore as untouched as my thoughts, yet now to recover thy life (though to restore thy youth it be impossible) I will do that to Endymion which yet never mortal man could boast of heretofore, nor shall ever hope for hereafter. (*She kisses him.*)

Eumenides. Madam, he beginneth to stir.

Cynthia. Soft, Eumenides, stand still.

Eumenides. Ah! I see his eyes almost open.

Cynthia. I command thee once again, stir not: I will stand behind him.

Panelion. What do I see? Endymion almost awake?

Eumenides. Endymion, Endymion, art thou deaf or dumb? Or hath this long sleep taken away thy memory? Ah! my sweet Endymion, seest thou not Eumenides, thy faithful friend; thy faithful Eumenides, who for thy sake hath been careless of his own content? Speak, Endymion! Endymion! Endymion!

Endymion. Endymion! I call to mind such a name.

Eumenides. Hast thou forgotten thyself, Endymion? Then do I not marvel thou rememberest not thy friend. I tell thee thou art Endymion, and I Eumenides. Behold also, Cynthia, by whose favour thou art awaked, and by whose virtue thou shalt continue thy natural course.

Cynthia. Endymion! Speak, sweet Endymion! knowest thou not Cynthia!

Endymion. Oh heavens! whom do I behold? Fair Cynthia, divine Cynthia?

Cynthia. I am Cynthia, and thou Endymion.

Endymion. Endymion! What do I hear? What! a grey-beard, hollow eyes, withered body, decayed limbs, and all in one night?

Eumenides. One night! Thou hast slept here forty years, by what enchantress, as yet it is not known: and behold the twig to which thou laidest thy head, is now become a tree. Callest thou not Eumenides to remembrance?

Endymion. Thy name I do remember by the sound, but thy favour I do not yet call to mind: only divine Cynthia, to whom time, fortune, death, and destiny are subject, I see and remember; and in all humility, I regard and reverence.

Cynthia. You shall have good cause to remember Eumenides, who hath for thy safety forsaken his own solace.

Endymion. Am I that Endymion, who was wont in court to lead my life, and in jousts, tourneys, and arms, to exercise my youth? Am I that Endymion?

Eumenides. Thou art that Endymion, and I Eumenides: wilt thou not yet call me to remembrance?

Endymion. Ah! sweet Eumenides, I now perceive thou art he, and that myself have the name of Endymion; but that this should be my body, I doubt: for how could my curled locks be turned to grey hair, and my strong body to a dying weakness, having waxed old, and not knowing it.

Cynthia. Well, Endymion, arise: awhile sit down, for that thy limbs are stiff and not able to stay thee, and tell what thou hast seen in thy sleep all this while. What dreams, visions, thoughts, and fortunes: for it is impossible but in so long a time thou shouldst see strange things."

Act V. Scene 1.

It does not take away from the pathos of this poetical allegory on the chances of love and the progress of human life, that it may be supposed to glance indirectly at the conduct of Queen Elizabeth to our author, who, after fourteen years' expectation of the place of Master of the Revels, was at last disappointed. This princess took no small delight in keeping her poets in a sort of Fool's Paradise. The wit of Lyly, in parts of this romantic drama, seems to have grown spirited and classical with his subject. He puts this fine hyperbolical irony in praise of Dipsas, (a most unamiable personage, as it will appear,) into the mouth of Sir Tophas:

"Oh, what fine thin hair hath Dipsas! What a pretty low forehead! What a tall and stately nose! What little hollow eyes! What great and goodly lips! How harmless is she, being toothless! Her fingers fat and short, adorned with long nails like a bittern! What a low stature she is, and yet what a great foot she carrieth! How thrifty must she be, in whom there is no waist; how virtuous she is like to be over whom no man can be jealous!" *Act III. Scene* 3.

It is singular that the style of this author, which is extremely sweet and flowing, should have been the butt of ridicule to his contemporaries, particularly Drayton, who compliments Sydney as the author that

> "Did first reduce
> Our tongue from Lyly's writing, then in use;
> Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,
> Playing with words and idle similes,
> As the English apes and very zanies be
> Of every thing that they do hear and see."

Which must apply to the prose style of his work, called "Euphues and his England," and is much more like Sir Philip Sydney's own manner, than the dramatic style of our poet. Besides the passages above quoted, I might refer to the opening speeches of Midas, and again to the admirable contention between Pan and Apollo for the palm of music.—His Alexander and Campaspe is another sufficient answer to the charge. This play is a very pleasing transcript of old manners and sentiment. It is full of sweetness and point, of Attic salt and the honey of Hymettus. The following song given to Apelles, would not disgrace the mouth of the prince of painters:

> "Cupid and my Campaspe play'd
> At cards for kisses, Cupid paid;
> He stakes his quiver, bow, and arrows:
> His mother's doves and team of sparrows;
> Loses them too, then down he throws
> The coral of his lip, the rose
> Growing on 's cheek (but none knows how)
> With these the crystal of his brow
> And then the dimple of his chin;
> All these did my Campaspe win.
> At last he set her both his eyes,
> She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
> O, Love! has she done this to thee?
> What shall, alas! become of me?"

The conclusion of this drama is as follows. Alexander addressing himself to Apelles, says,

"Well, enjoy one another: I give her thee frankly, Apelles. Thou shalt

see that Alexander maketh but a toy of love, and leadeth affection in fetters: using fancy as a fool to make him sport, or a minstrel to make him merry It is not the amorous glance of an eye can settle an idle thought in the heart: no, no, it is children's game, a life for semp ters and scholars; the one, pricking in clouts, have nothing else to think on; the other picking fancies out of books, have little else to marvel at Go, Apelles, take with you your Campaspe; Alexander is cloyed with looking on at that, which thou wonderest at.

Apelles. Thanks to your majesty on bended knee; you have honoured Apelles.

Campaspe. Thanks with bowed heart; you have blessed Campaspe.

[*Exeunt*

Alexander. Page, go warn Clytus and Parmenio, and the other lords, to be in readiness; let the trumpet sound, strike up the drum, and I will presently into Persia. How now, Hephistion, is Alexander able to resist love as he list?

Hephistion. The conquering of Thebes was not so honourable as the subduing of these thoughts.

Alexander. It were a shame Alexander should desire to command the world, if he could not command himself. But come, let us go. And, good Hephistion, when all the world is won, and every country is thine and mine, either find me out another to subdue, or on my word, I will fall in love."

Marlowe is a name that stands high, and almost first in this list of dramatic worthies. He was a little before Shakspeare's time,* and has a marked character both from him and the rest. There is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by any thing but its own energies. His thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames: or throwing out black smoke and mists, that hide the dawn of genius, or like a poisonous mineral, corrode the heart. His "Life and Death of Doctor Faustus," though an imperfect and unequal performance, is his greatest work. Faustus himself is a rude sketch, but it is a gigantic one. This character may be considered as a personification of the pride of will and eagerness of curiosity, sublimed beyond the reach of fear and remorse. He is hurried away, and, as it were, devoured by a tormenting desire to enlarge his knowledge to the utmost bounds of nature and art, and to extend his power with his knowledge. He would realize all the fictions of a lawless imagination, would solve the most subtle speculations of abstract reason; and for this purpose sets at defiance all mortal

* He died about 1594.

consequences, and leagues himself with demoniacal power, with "fate and metaphysical aid." The idea of witchcraft and necromancy, once the dread of the vulgar and the darling of the visionary recluse, seems to have had its origin in the restless tendency of the human mind, to conceive of and aspire to more than it can achieve by natural means, and in the obscure apprehension that the gratification of this extravagant and unauthorized desire can only be attained by the sacrifice of all our ordinary hopes and better prospects, to the infernal agents that lend themselves to its accomplishment. Such is the foundation of the present story. Faustus, in his impatience to fulfil at once and for a moment, for a few short years, all the desires and conceptions of his soul, is willing to give in exchange his soul and body to the great enemy of mankind. Whatever he fancies, becomes by this means present to his sense: whatever he commands is done. He calls back time past, and anticipates the future: the visions of antiquity pass before him, Babylon in all its glory, Paris and Œnone: all the projects of philosophers, or creations of the poet, pay tribute at his feet: all the delights of fortune, of ambition, of pleasure, and of learning are centred in his person; and from a short-lived dream of supreme felicity and drunken power, he sinks into an abyss of darkness and perdition. This is the alternative to which he submits; the bond which he signs with his blood! As the outline of the character is grand and daring, the execution is abrupt and fearful. The thoughts are vast and irregular; and the style halts and staggers under them, "with uneasy steps;"—"such footing found the sole of unblest feet." There is a little fustian and incongruity of metaphor now and then, which is not very injurious to the subject. It is time to give a few passages in illustration of this account. He thus opens his mind at the beginning:

> "How am I glutted with conceit of this!
> Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?
> Resolve me of all ambiguities?
> Perform what desperate enterprize I will?
> I'll have them fly to India for gold,
> Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
> And search all corners of the new-found world
> For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.

I'll have them read me strange philosophy,
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings:
I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg;
I'll have them fill the public schools with skill,
Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad;
I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
And reign sole king of all the provinces:
Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war
Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp bridge,
I'll make my servile spirit to invent.

Enter VALDES *and* CORNELIUS.

Come, German Valdes and Cornelius,
And make me blest with your sage conference.
Valdes, sweet Valdes, and Cornelius,
Know that your words have won me at the last
To practise magic and concealed arts.
Philosophy is odious and obscure;
Both Law and Physic are for petty wits;
'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me.
Then, gentle friends, aid me in this attempt;
And I, that have with subtle syllogisms
Gravell'd the pastors of the German church,
And made the flow'ring pride of Wittenberg
Swarm to my problems, as th' infernal spirits
On sweet Musæus when he came to hell;
Will be as cunning as Agrippa was,
Whose shadow made all Europe honour him.

Valdes. These books, thy wit, and our experience
Shall make all nations to canonize us.
As Indian Moors obey their Spanish lords,
So shall the spirits of every element
Be always serviceable to us three.
Like Lions shall they guard us when we please;
Like Almain Rutters with their horseman's staves,
Or Lapland giants trotting by our sides:
Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.
From Venice they shall drag whole argosies,
And from America the golden fleece,
That yearly stuffs old Philip's treasury*;
If learned Faustus will be resolute.

* An anachronism.

Faustus. As resolute am I in this
As thou to live, therefore object it not."

In his colloquy with the fallen angel, he shows the fixedness of his determination :—

"What! is great Mephostophilis so passionate
For being deprived of the joys of heaven?
Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess."

Yet we afterwards find him faltering in his resolution, and struggling with the extremity of his fate :

"My heart is harden'd, I cannot repent:
Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven;
Swords, poisons, halters, and envenom'd steel
Are laid before me to dispatch myself;
And long ere this I should have done the deed,
Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
Have I not made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Œnon's death?
And hath not he that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sounds of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephostophilis?
Why should I die then or basely despair?
I am resolv'd, Faustus shall not repent.
Come, Mephostophilis, let us dispute again,
And reason of divine astrology."

There is one passage more of this kind, which is so striking and beautiful, so like a rapturous and deeply passionate dream, that I cannot help quoting it here : it is the address to the Apparition of Helen.

Enter HELEN *again, passing over between two Cupids.*

Faustus. Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless tow'rs of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul! See where it flies.
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for Heav'n is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy shall Wittenberg be sack'd;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,

And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
—Oh! thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars:
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter,
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azure arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour."

The ending of the play is terrible, and his last exclamations betray an anguish of mind and vehemence of passion not to be contemplated without shuddering:

—"Oh, Faustus!
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heav'n,
That time may cease, and midnight never come.
Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but a year,
A month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent, and save his soul.
(*The Clock strikes twelve.*)
It strikes! it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.
Oh soul! be changed into small water-drops,
And fall into the ocean; ne'er to be found.
(*Thunder. Enter the* Devils.)
Oh! mercy, Heav'n! Look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!—
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Oh! Mephostophilis."

Perhaps the finest *trait* in the whole play, and that which softens and subdues the horror of it, is the interest taken by the two scholars in the fate of their master, and their unavailing attempts to dissuade him from his relentless career. The regard to learning is the ruling passion of this drama, and its indications are as mild and amiable in them as its ungoverned pursuit has been fatal to Faustus.

"Yet, for he was a scholar once admir'd

For wondrous knowledge in our German schools,
We'll give his mangled limbs due burial;
And all the students, clothed in mourning black,
Shall wait upon his heavy funeral."

So the Chorus:

"Cut is the branch that might have grown full strait,
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough,
That sometime grew within this learned man."

And still more affecting are his own conflicts of mind and agonizing doubts on this subject just before, when he exclaims to his friends: "Oh, gentlemen! Hear me with patience, and tremble not at my speeches. Though my heart pant and quiver to remember that I have been a student here these thirty years; oh! would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book!" A finer compliment was never paid, nor a finer lesson ever read to the pride of learning. The intermediate comic parts, in which Faustus is not directly concerned, are mean and grovelling to the last degree. One of the Clowns says to another, "Snails! what hast got there? A book? Why thou can'st not tell ne'er a word on't." Indeed, the ignorance and barbarism of the time, as here described, might almost justify Faustus's overstrained admiration of learning, and turn the heads of those who possessed it from novelty and unaccustomed excitement, as the Indians are made drunk with wine! Goëthe, the German poet, has written a drama on this tradition of his country, which is considered a master-piece. I cannot find in Marlowe's play, any proofs of the atheism or impiety attributed to him, unless the belief in witchcraft and the Devil can be regarded as such; and at the time he wrote, not to have believed in both would have been construed into the rankest atheism and irreligion. There is a delight, as Mr. Lamb says, "in dallying with interdicted subjects;" but that does not, by any means, imply either a practical or speculative disbelief of them.

'Lust's Dominion, or The Lascivious Queen,' is referable to the same general style of writing; and is a striking picture, or rather caricature of the unrestrained love of power, not as

connected with learning, but with regal ambition and external sway. There is a good deal of the same intense passion, the same recklessness of purpose, the same smouldering fire within: but there is not any of the same relief to the mind in the lofty imaginative nature of the subject, and the continual repetition of plain practical villainy and undigested horrors disgusts the sense and blunts the interest. The mind is hardened into obduracy, not melted into sympathy, by such barefaced and barbarous cruelty. Eleazar, the Moor, is such another character as Aaron in 'Titus Andronicus;' and this play might be set down without injustice as "pew-fellow" to that. I should think Marlowe has a much fairer claim to be the author of 'Titus Andronicus' than Shakspeare, at least from internal evidence; and the argument of Schlegel, that it must have been Shakspeare's, because there was no one else capable of producing either its faults or beauties, fails in each particular. The Queen is the same character in both these plays, and the business of the plot is carried on in much the same revolting manner, by making the nearest friends and relatives of the wretched victims the instruments of their sufferings and persecution by an arch-villain. To show, however, that the same strong-braced tone of passionate declamation is kept up, take the speech of Eleazer on refusing the proffered crown:

"What, do none rise?
No, no, for kings indeed are deities.
And who'd not (as the sun) in brightness shine?
To be the greatest is to be divine.
Who among millions would not be the mightiest?
To sit in godlike state; to have all eyes
Dazzled with admiration, and all tongues
Shouting loud prayers; to rob every heart
Of love; to have the strength of every arm;
A sovereign's name, why 'tis a sovereign charm.
This glory round about me hath thrown beams:
I have stood upon the top of fortune's wheel,
And backwards turned the iron screw of fate.
The destinies have spun a silken thread
About my life; yet thus I cast aside
The shape of Majesty, and on my knee
To this Imperial state lowly resign

This usurpation; wiping off your fears
Which struck so hard upon me."

This is enough to show the unabated vigour of the author's style. This strain is certainly doing justice to the pride of ambition, and the imputed majesty of kings.

We have heard much of "Marlowe's mighty line," and this play furnishes frequent instances of it. There are a number of single lines that seem struck out in the heat of a glowing fancy, and leave a track of golden fire behind them. The following are a few that might be given.

"I know he is not dead; I know proud death
Durst not behold such sacred majesty."
* * * * *
"Hang both your greedy ears upon my lips,
Let them devour my speech, suck in my breath."
* * * * *
——"From discontent grows treason,
And on the stalk of treason death."
* * * * *
"Tyrants swim safest in a crimson flood."
* * * * *

The two following lines—

"Oh! I grow dull, and the cold hand of sleep
Hath thrust his icy fingers in my breast"-

are the same as those in King John—

"And none of you will bid the winter come
To thrust his icy fingers in my maw."

And again the Moor's exclamation:

"Now by the proud complexion of my cheeks,
Ta'en from the kisses of the amorous sun"

's the same as Cleopatra's—

"But I that am with Phœbus' amorous pinches black," &c.

Eleazer's sarcasm,

—— " These dignities,
Like poison, make men swell; this rat's-bane honour,
Oh, 'tis so sweet! they'll lick it till they burst"—

shows the utmost virulence of smothered spleen; and his concluding strain of malignant exultation has been but tamely imitated by Young's Zanga:

" Now, tragedy, thou minion of the night,
Rhamnusia's pew-fellow,* to thee I'll sing,
Upon a harp made of dead Spanish bones,
The proudest instrument the world affords:
To thee that never blushest, though thy cheeks
Are full of blood, O Saint Revenge, to thee
I consecrate my murders, all my stabs," &c.

It may be worth while to observe, for the sake of the curious, that many of Marlowe's most sounding lines consist of monosyllables, or nearly so. The repetition of Eleazer's taunt to the Cardinal, retorting his own words upon him, " Spaniard or Moor, the saucy slave shall die"—may perhaps have suggested Falconbridge's spirited reiteration of the phrase, " And hang a calf's skin on those recreant limbs."

I do not think 'The Rich Jew of Malta' so characteristic a specimen of this writer's powers. It has not the same fierce glow of passion or expression. It is extreme in act, and outrageous in plot and catastrophe; but it has not the same vigorous filling up. The author seems to have relied on the horror inspired by the subject, and the national disgust excited against the principal character, to rouse the feelings of the audience: for the rest, it is a tissue of gratuitous, unprovoked, and incredible atrocities, which are committed, one upon the back of the other, by the parties concerned, without motive, passion or object. There are, notwithstanding, some striking passages in it, as Barabbas's description of the bravo, Philia Borzo†; the relation of

* This expression seems to be ridiculed by Falstaff.

† " He sent a shaggy, tattered, staring slave,
That when he speaks draws out his grisly beard,
And winds it twice or thrice about his ear;
Whose face has been a grindstone for men's swords:

his own unaccountable villanies to Ithamore; his rejoicing over his recovered jewels "as the morning lark sings over her young;' and the backwardness he declares in himself to forgive the Christian injuries that are offered him,* which may have given the idea of one of Shylock's speeches, where he ironically disclaims any enmity to the merchants on the same account. It is perhaps hardly fair to compare the Jew of Malta with the Merchant of Venice; for it is evident that Shakspeare's genius shows to as much advantage in knowledge of character, in variety, and stage-effect, as it does in point of general humanity.

Edward II. is, according to the modern standard of composi-

> His hands are hack'd, some fingers cut quite off,
> Who when he speaks, grunts like a hog, and looks
> Like one that is employed in catzerie,
> And cross-biting; such a rogue
> As is the husband to a hundred whores;
> And I by him must send three hundred crowns."
>
> *Act IV.*

* "In spite of these swine-eating Christians
(Unchosen nation, never circumcised;
Such poor villains as were ne'er thought upon,
Till Titus and Vespasian conquer'd us)
Am I become as wealthy as I am.
They hoped my daughter would have been a nun,
But she's at home, and I have bought a house
As great and fair as is the Governor's:
And there, in spite of Malta, will I dwell,
Having Ferneze's hand; whose heart I'll have,
Ay, and his son's too, or it shall go hard.

"I am not of the tribe of Levi, I,
That can so soon forget an injury.
We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please;
And when we grin we bite; yet are our looks
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
I learn'd in Florence how to kiss my hand,
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
And duck as low as any bare-foot Friar:
Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,
Or else be gather'd for in our synagogue,
That when the offering bason comes to me,
Even for charity I may spit into it"

tion, Marlowe's best play. It is written with few offences against the common rules, and in a succession of smooth and flowing lines. The poet however succeeds less in the voluptuous and effeminate descriptions which he here attempts, than in the more dreadful and violent bursts of passion. Edward II. is drawn with historic truth, but without much dramatic effect. The management of the plot is feeble and desultory; little interest is excited in the various turns of fate; the characters are too worthless, have too little energy, and their punishment is, in general, too well deserved to excite our commiseration; so that this play will bear, on the whole, but a distant comparison with Shakspeare's Richard II. in conduct, power, or effect. But the death of Edward II., in Marlowe's tragedy, is certainly superior to that of Shakspeare's King; and in heart-breaking distress, and the sense of human weakness, claiming pity from utter helplessness and conscious misery, is not surpassed by any writer whatever.

"*Edward.* Weep'st thou already? List awhile to me,
And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is,
Or as Matrevis, hewn from the Caucasus,
Yet will it melt ere I have done my tale.
This dungeon where they keep me, is the sink
Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.
Lightborn. Oh villains.
Edward. And here in mire and puddle have I stood
This ten days' space; and lest that I should sleep,
One plays continually upon a drum.
They give me bread and water, being a king;
So that, for want of sleep and sustenance,
My mind's distemper'd, and my body's numb'd:
And whether I have limbs or no, I know not.
Oh! would my blood drop out from every vein,
As doth this water from my tatter'd robes!
Tell Isabel, the Queen, I look'd not thus,
When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,
And there unhors'd the Duke of Cleremont."

There are some excellent passages scattered up and down. The description of the King and Gaveston looking out of the palace window, and laughing at the courtiers as they pass, and that of the different spirit shown by the lion and the forest deer,

when wounded, are among the best. The song "Come live with me and be my love," to which Sir Walter Raleigh wrote an answer, is Marlowe's.

Heywood I shall mention next, as a direct contrast to Marlowe in everything but the smoothness of his verse. As Marlowe's imagination glows like a furnace, Heywood's is a gentle lambent flame, that purifies without consuming. His manner is simplicity itself. There is nothing supernatural, nothing startling, or terrific. He makes use of the commonest circumstances of every-day life, and of the easiest tempers, to show the workings, or rather the inefficacy of the passions, the *vis inertiæ* of tragedy. His incidents strike from their very familiarity, and the distresses he paints invite our sympathy from the calmness and resignation with which they are borne. The pathos might be deemed purer from its having no mixture of turbulence or vindictiveness in it; and in proportion as the sufferers are made to deserve a better fate. In the midst of the most untoward reverses and cutting injuries, good nature and good sense keep their accustomed sway. He describes men's errors with tenderness, and their duties only with zeal, and the heightenings of a poetic fancy. His style is equally natural, simple, and unconstrained. The dialogue (bating the verse) is such as might be uttered in ordinary conversation. It is beautiful prose put into heroic measure. It is not so much that he uses the common English idiom for everything (for that I think the most poetical and impassioned of our elder dramatists do equally), but the simplicity of the characters and the equable flow of the sentiments do not require or suffer it to be warped from the tone of level speaking, by figurative expressions, or hyperbolical allusions. A few scattered exceptions occur now and then, where the hectic flush of passion forces them from the lips, and they are not the worse for being rare. Thus, in the play called 'A Woman Killed with Kindness,' Wendoll, when reproached by Mrs. Frankford with his obligations to her husband, interrupts her hastily, by saying

> —— "Oh speak no more!
> For more than this I know, and have recorded
> Within the *red-leaved table* of my heart."

And further on, Frankford, when doubting his wife's fidelity, says. with less feeling indeed, but with much elegance of fancy,

> "Cold drops of sweat sit dangling on my hairs,
> Like morning dew upon the golden flow'rs."

So also, when returning to his house at midnight to make the fatal discovery, he exclaims,

> ——"Astonishment,
> Fear, and amazement, beat upon my heart,
> Even as a madman beats upon a drum."

It is the reality of things present to their imaginations that makes these writers so fine, so bold, and yet so true in what they describe. Nature lies open to them like a book, and was not to them "invisible, or dimly seen" through a veil of words and filmy abstractions. Such poetical ornaments are however to be met with at considerable intervals in this play, and do not disturb the calm serenity and domestic simplicity of the author's style. The conclusion of Wendoll's declaration of love to Mrs. Frankford may serve as an illustration of its general merits, both as to purity of thought and diction :

> "Fair, and of all beloved, I was not fearful
> Bluntly to give my life into your hand,
> And at one hazard, all my earthly means.
> Go, tell your husband: he will turn me off,
> And I am then undone. I care not, I;
> 'Twas for your sake. Perchance in rage he'll kill me;
> I care not; 'twas for you. Say I incur
> The general name of villain through the world,
> Of traitor to my friend : I care not, I;
> Poverty, shame, death, scandal, and reproach,
> For you I'll hazard all : why what care I ?
> For you I love, and for your love I'll die."

The affecting remonstrance of Frankford to his wife, and her repentant agony at parting with him, are already before the public, in Mr. Lamb's Specimens. The winding up of this play is rather awkwardly managed, and the moral is, according to established usage, equivocal. It required only Frankford's reconciliation to his wife, as well as his forgiveness of her, for the

highest breach of matrimonial duty, to have made a 'Woman Killed with Kindness,' a complete anticipation of the 'Stranger.' Heywood, however, was in that respect but half a Kotzebue!—The view here given of country manners is truly edifying. As to the higher walk of tragedy, we see the manners and moral sentiments of kings and nobles of former times, here we have the feuds and amiable qualities of country 'squires and their relatives; and such as were the rulers, such were their subjects. The frequent quarrels and ferocious habits of private life are well exposed in the fatal rencounter between Sir Francis Acton and Sir Charles Mountford about a hawking match, in the ruin and rancorous persecution of the latter in consequence, and in the hard, unfeeling, cold-blooded treatment he receives in his distress from his own relations, and from a fellow of the name of Shafton. After reading the sketch of this last character, who is introduced as a mere ordinary personage, the representative of a class, without any preface or apology, no one can doubt the credibility of that of Sir Giles Overreach, who is professedly held up (I should think almost unjustly) as a prodigy of grasping and hardened selfishness. The influence of philosophy and prevalence of abstract reasoning, if it has done nothing for our poetry, has done, I should hope, something for our manners. The callous declaration of one of these unconscionable churls,

"This is no world in which to pity men,"

might have been taken as a motto for the good old times in general, and with a very few reservations, if Heywood has not grossly libelled them.—Heywood's plots have little of artifice or regularity of design to recommend them. He writes on carelessly, as it happens, and trusts to Nature, and a certain happy tranquillity of spirit, for gaining the favour of the audience. He is said, besides attending to his duties as an actor, to have composed regularly a sheet a day. This may account in some measure for the unembarrassed facility of his style. His own account makes the number of his writings for the stage, or those in which he had a main hand, upwards of two hundred. In fact, I do not wonder at any quantity that an author is said

to have written; for the more a man writes, the more he can write.

The same remarks will apply, with certain modifications, to other remaining works of this writer, the 'Royal King and Loyal Subject,' 'A Challenge for Beauty,' and 'The English Traveller.' The barb of misfortune is sheathed in the mildness of the writer's temperament, and the story jogs on very comfortably, without effort or resistance, to the *euthanasia* of the catastrophe. In two of these the person principally aggrieved survives, and feels himself none the worse for it. The most splendid passage in Heywood's comedies is the account of Shipwreck by Drink, in 'The English Traveller,' which was the foundation of Cowley's Latin poem, *Naufragium Joculare*.

The names of Middleton and Rowley, with which I shall conclude this Lecture, generally appear together as two writers who frequently combined their talents in the production of joint pieces. Middleton (judging from their separate works) was "the more potent spirit" of the two; but they were neither of them equal to some others. Rowley appears to have excelled in describing a certain amiable quietness of disposition and disinterested tone of morality, carried almost to a paradoxical excess, as in his 'Fair Quarrel,' and in the comedy of 'A Woman never Vexed,' which is written in many parts, with a pleasing simplicity and *naiveté* equal to the novelty of the conception. Middleton's style was not marked by any peculiar quality of his own, but was made up, in equal proportions, of the faults and excellences common to his contemporaries. In his 'Women beware Women,' there is a rich marrowy vein of internal sentiment, with fine occasional insight into human nature, and cool cutting irony of expression. He is lamentably deficient in the plot and denouement of the story. It is like the rough draught of a tragedy, with a number of fine things thrown in, and the best made use of first; but it tends to no fixed goal, and the interest decreases, instead of increasing as we read on, for want of previous arrangement and an eye to the whole. We have fine studies of heads, a piece of richly coloured drapery, "a foot, an hand, an eye from Nature drawn, that's worth a history;" but the groups are ill disposed, nor are the figures pro-

portioned to each other or the size of the canvas. The author's power is *in* the subject, not *over* it; or he is in possession of excellent materials, which he husbands very ill. This character, though it applies more particularly to Middleton, might be applied generally to the age. Shakspeare alone seemed to stand over his work, and to do what he pleased with it. He saw to the end of what he was about, and with the same faculty of lending himself to the impulses of Nature and the impression of the moment, never forgot that he himself had a task to perform, nor the place which each figure ought to occupy in his general design.—The characters of Livia, of Brancha, of Leantio and his mother, in the play of which I am speaking, are all admirably drawn. The art and malice of Livia show equal want of principle and acquaintance with the world; and the scene in which she holds the mother in suspense, while she betrays the daughter into the power of the profligate duke, is a master-piece of dramatic skill. The proneness of Brancha to tread the primrose path of pleasure, after she has made the first false step, and her sudden transition from unblemished virtue to the most abandoned vice, in which she is notably seconded by her mother-in-law's ready submission to the temptations of wealth and power, form a true and striking picture. The first intimation of the intrigue that follows, is given in a way that is not a little remarkable for simplicity and acuteness. Brancha says,

> "Did not the duke look up? Methought he saw **us.**"

To which the more experienced mother answers,

> "That's every one's conceit that sees a duke;
> If he look stedfastly, he looks straight at them,
> When he, perhaps, good careful gentleman,
> Never minds any, but the look he casts
> Is at his own intentions, and his object
> Only the public good."

It turns out, however, that he had been looking at them, and not "at the public good." The moral of this tragedy is rendered more impressive from the manly, independent character of Leantio in the first instance, and the manner in which he dwells, in a sort of doting abstraction, on his own comforts, of being possessed

of a beautiful and faithful wife. As he approaches his own house, and already treads on the brink of perdition, he exclaims with an exuberance of satisfaction not to be restrained—

> "How near am I to a happiness
> That earth exceeds not! not another like it:
> The treasures of the deep are not so precious,
> As are the concealed comforts of a man
> Lock'd up in woman's love. I scent the air
> Of blessings when I come but near the house:
> What a delicious breath marriage sends forth!
> The violet bed's not sweeter. Honest wedlock
> Is like a banqueting house built in a garden,
> On which the spring's chaste flowers take delight
> To cast their modest odours; when base lust,
> With all her powders, paintings, and best pride,
> Is but a fair house built by a ditch side.
> When I behold a glorious dangerous strumpet,
> Sparkling in beauty and destruction too,
> Both at a twinkling, I do liken straight
> Her beautified body to a goodly temple
> That's built on vaults where carcases lie rotting;
> And so by little and little I shrink back again,
> And quench desire with a cool meditation;
> And I'm as well, methinks. Now for a welcome
> Able to draw men's envies upon man:
> A kiss now that will hang upon my lip,
> As sweet as morning dew upon a rose,
> And full as long; after a five days' fast
> She'll be so greedy now and cling about me:
> I take care how I shall be rid of her:
> And here 't begins."

This dream is dissipated by the entrance of Brancha and his Mother.

> "*Bran.* Oh, sir, you're welcome home.
> *Moth.* Oh, is he come? I am glad on't.
> *Lean.* (*Aside.*) Is that all?
> Why this is dreadful now as sudden death
> To some rich man that flatters all his sins
> With promise of repentance when he's old,
> And dies in the midway before he comes to 't.
> Sure you're not well, Brancha! how dost, prithee?
> *Bran.* I have been better than I am at this time.
> *Lean.* Alas, I thought so.

Bran. Nay, I have been worse too,
Than now you see me, sir.
Lean. I'm glad thou mend'st yet,
I feel my heart mend too. How came it to thee?
Has any thing dislik'd thee in my absence?
Bran. No, certain, I have had the best content
That Florence can afford.
Lean. Thou makest the best on't:
Speak, mother, what's the cause? you must needs know.
Moth. Troth, I know none, son; let her speak herself;
Unless it be the same gave Lucifer a tumbling cast; that's pride.
Bran. Methinks this house stands nothing to my mind;
I'd have some pleasant lodging i' th' high street, sir;
Or if 'twere near the court, sir, that were much better;
'Tis a sweet recreation for a gentlewoman
To stand in a bay-window, and see gallants.
Lean. Now I have another temper, a mere stranger
To that of yours, it seems; I should delight
To see none but yourself.
Bran. I praise not that;
Too fond is as unseemly as too churlish;
I would not have a husband of that proneness,
To kiss me before company, for a world;
Besides, 'tis tedious to see one thing still, sir,
Be it the best that ever heart affected;
Nay, wer't yourself, whose love had power you know
To bring me from my friends, I would not stand thus,
And gaze upon you always; troth, I could not, sir;
As good be blind, and have no use of sight,
As look on one thing still: what's the eye's treasure,
But change of objects? You are learned, sir,
And know I speak not ill; 'tis full as virtuous
For woman's eye to look on several men,
As for her heart, sir, to be fixed on one.
Lean. Now, thou com'st home to me; a kiss for that word.
Bran. No matter for a kiss, sir; let it pass;
'Tis but a toy, we'll not so much as mind it;
Let's talk of other business, and forget it.
What news now of the pirates? any stirring?
Prithee discourse a little.
Moth. (*Aside.*) I'm glad he's here yet,
To see her tricks himself; I had lied monstrously
If I had told 'em first.
Lean. Speak, what's the humour, sweet,
You make your lips so strange? This was not wont.
Bran. Is there no kindness betwixt man and wife,
Unless they make a pigeon-house of friendship,

And be still billing? 'Tis the idlest fondness
That ever was invented; and 'tis pity
It's grown a fashion for poor gentlewomen;
There's many a disease kiss'd in a year by't,
And a French court'sy made to't. Alas, sir,
Think of the world, how we shall live, grow serious;
We have been married a whole fortnight now.
Lean. How? a whole fortnight! why, is that so long?
Bran. 'Tis time to leave off dalliance; 'tis a doctrine
Of your own teaching, if you be remember'd,
And I was bound to obey it.
Moth. (*Aside.*) Here's one fits him;
This was well catch'd i' faith, son, like a fellow
That rids another country of a plague,
And brings it home with him to his own house.
[*A messenger from the Duke knocks within.*
Who knocks?
Lean. Who's there now? Withdraw you, Brancha;
Thou art a gem no stranger's eye must see,
Howe'er thou'rt pleas'd now to look dull on me. [*Exit Brancha.*"

The Witch of Middleton is his most remarkable performance; both on its own account, and from the use that Shakspeare has made of some of the characters and speeches in his 'Macbeth.' Though the employment which Middleton has given to Hecate and the rest, in thwarting the purposes and perplexing the business of familiar and domestic life, is not so grand or appalling as the more stupendous agency which Shakspeare has assigned them, yet it is not easy to deny the merit of the first invention to Middleton, who has embodied the existing superstitions of the time, respecting that anomalous class of beings, with a high spirit of poetry, of the most grotesque and fanciful kind. The songs and incantations made use of are very nearly the same. The other parts of this play are not so good; and the solution of the principal difficulty, by Antonio's falling down a trap-door, most lame and impotent. As a specimen of the similarity of the preternatural machinery, I shall here give one entire scene.

"*The Witches' Habitation.*

En'er Hecgat, Stadlin, Hoppo, *and other Witches*

Hec. The moon's a gallant: see how brisk she rides.
Stad. Here's a rich evening, Hecgat.
Hec. Aye, is 't not, wenches,
To take a journey of five thousand miles?

Hop. Ours will be more to-night.

Hec. Oh, 't will be precious. Heard you the owl yet?

Stad. Briefly, in the copse,
As we came through now.

Hec. 'Tis high time for us then.

Stad. There was a bat hung at my lips three times
As we came through the woods, and drank her fill:
Old Puckle saw her.

Hec. You are fortunate still,
The very scritch-owl lights upon your shoulder,
And woos you like a pigeon. Are you furnish'd?
Have you your ointments?

Stad. All.

Hec. Prepare to flight then
I'll overtake you swiftly.

Stad. Hie then, Heccat!
We shall be up betimes.

Hec. I'll reach you quickly. [*They ascend.*

Enter FIRESTONE.

Fire. They are all going a-birding to-night. They talk of fowls i' th' air, that fly by day, I'm sure ther'll be a company of foul sluts there to-night. If we have not mortality affeared, I'll be hang'd, for they are able to putrify it, to infect a whole region. She spies me now

Hec. What, Firestone, our sweet son?

Fire. A little sweeter than some of you; or a dunghill were too good for me.

Hec. How much hast there?

Fire. Nineteen, and all brave plump ones; besides six lizards, and three serpentine eggs.

Hec. Dear and sweet boy! What herbs hast thou?

Fire. I have some mar-martin and man-dragon.

Hec. Marmarittin, and mandragora, thou would'st say.

Fire. Here's pannax, too. I thank thee; my pan akes, I am sure, with kneeling down to cut 'em.

Hec. And setago,
Hedge-hissop, too! How near ne goes my cuttings!
Were they all cropt by moon-light?

Fire. Every blade of 'em, or I am a moon-calf, mother.

Hec. Hie thee home with 'em.
Look well to th' house to night: I'm for aloft.

Fire. Aloft, quoth you? I would you would break your neck once, that I might have all quickly (*Aside.*)—Hark, hark, mother! They are above the steeple already, flying over your head with a noise of musicians.

Hec. They are indeed. Help me! Help me! I'm too late else.

SONG (*in the air above.*)

Come away, come away!
Heccat, Heccat, come away!

Hec. I come, I come, I come, I come,
With all the speed I may,
With all the speed I may.
Where's Stadlin?

(*Above.*) Here.

Hec. Where's Puckle?

(*Above.*) Here:
And Hoppo too, and Hellwain too;
We lack but you, we lack but you.
Come away, make up the count

Hec. I will but 'noint, and then I mount.

(*A Spirit descends in the shape of a cat.*)

(*Above.*) There's one come down to fetch his dues;
A kiss, a coll, a sip of blood;
And why thou stay'st so long, I muse, I muse,
Since th' air's so sweet and good?

Hec. Oh, art thou come,
What news, what news?

Spirit. All goes still to our delight,
Either come, or else
Refuse, refuse.

Hec. Now I am furnish'd for the flight.

Fire. Hark, hark! The cat sings a brave treble in her own language.

Hec. (*Ascending with the Spirit.*)
Now I go, now I fly,
Malkin, my sweet spirit, and I.
Oh, what a dainty pleasure 'tis
To ride in the air
When the moon shines fair,
And sing, and dance, and toy, and kiss!
Over woods, high rocks, and mountains,
Over seas our mistress' fountains,
Over steep towers and turrets
We fly by night, 'mongst troops of spirits.
No ring of bells to our ears sounds,
No howls of wolves, no yelps of hounds;
No, not the noise of water's breach,
Or cannon's roar our height can reach.

(*Above.*) No ring of bells, &c.

Fire. Well, mother, I thank your kindness. You must be gamboling i' the air, and leave me to walk here like a fool and a mortal. [*Exit.*

The incantation scene at the cauldron is also the original of that in Macbeth, and is in like manner introduced by the Duchess's visiting the Witches' habitation.

" *The Witches' Habitation.*

Enter Duchess, Heccat, Firestone.

Hec. What death is 't you desire for Almachildes?

Duch. A sudden and a subtle.

Hec. Then I've fitted you.
Here lie the gifts of both; sudden and subtle;
His picture made in wax and gently molten
By a blue fire kindled with dead men's eyes,
Will waste him by degrees.

Duch. In what time, pr'ythee?

Hec. Perhaps in a month's progress.

Duch. What! A month?
Out upon pictures, if they be so tedious;
Give me things with some life.

Hec. Then seek no farther.

Duch. This must be done with speed, dispatched this night,
If it may possibly.

Hec. I have it for you:
Here's that will do't. Stay but perfection's time,
And that's not five hours hence.

Duch. Can'st thou do this?

Hec. Can I?

Duch. I mean, so closely.

Hec. So closely do you mean too?

Duch. So artfully, so cunningly.

Hec. Worse and worse; doubts and incredulities,
They make me mad. Let scrupulous creatures know,

Cum volui, ripis ipsis mirantibus, amnes
In fontes rediere suos: concussaque sisto,
Stantia concutio cantu freta; nubila pello,
Nubilaque induco: ventos abigoque vocoque.
Vipereas rumpo verbis et carmine fauces;
Et silvas moveo, jubeoque tremiscere montes,
Et mugire solum, manesque exire sepulchris.
Te quoque, Luna, traho.

Can you doubt me then, daughter?
That can make mountains tremble, miles of woods walk;
Whole earth's foundations bellow, and the spirits
Of the entomb'd to burst out from their marbles;
Nay, draw yon moon to my involv'd designs?

Fire. I know as well as can be when my mother's mad, and our great cat angry; for the one spits French then, and the other spits Latin.

Duch. I did not doubt you, mother.

Hec. No? what did you?
My power's so firm, it is not to be question'd.

Duch. Forgive what's past and now I know th' offensiveness
That vexes art, I'll shun the occasion ever

Hec. Leave all to me and my five sisters, daughter.
It shall be conveyed in at howlet-time.
Take you no care. My spirits know their moments;
Raven or scritch-owl never fly by th' door,
But they call in (I thank 'em), and they lose not by 't.
I give 'em barley soak'd in infants' blood:
They shall have *semina cum sanguine*,
Their gorge cramm'd full, if they come once to our house:
We are no niggard. [*Exit* DUCHESS.

Fire. They fare but too well when they come hither. They ate up as much t' other night as would have made me a good conscionable pudding.

Hec. Give me some lizard's brain: quickly, Firestone!
Where's grannam Stadlin, and all the rest o' th' sisters?

Fire. All at hand, forsooth. [*The other Witches appear*

Hec. Give me marmaritin; some bear-breech. When?

Fire. Here's bear-breech and lizard's brain, forsooth.

Hec. Into the vessel;
And fetch three ounces of the red-hair'd girl
I kill'd last midnight

Fire. Whereabout, sweet mother?

Hec. Hip; hip or flank. Where is the acopus?

Fire. You shall have acopus, forsooth.

Hec. Stir, stir about, whilst I begin the charm.

A CHARM SONG.

(*The Witches going about the cauldron.*)

Black spirits, and white; red spirits, and grey;
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may.
Titty, Tiffin, keep it stiff in;
Firedrake, Puckey, make it lucky;
Liard, Robin, you must bob in.
Round, around, around, about, about;
All ill come running in; all good keep out!

1st Witch. Here's the blood of a bat.
Hec. Put in that; oh, put in that.
2nd Witch. Here's libbard's-bane.
Hec. Put in again.
1st Witch. The juice of toad; the oil of adder.
2nd Witch. Those will make the younker madder.
Hec. Put in; there's all, and rid the stench.
Fire. Nay, here's three ounces of the red-hair'd wench.
All. Round, around, around, &c.
Hec. So, so, enough: into the vessel with it.
There; 't hath the true perfection. I'm so light
At any mischief: there's no villany
But is a tune, methinks.

Fire. A tune! 'Tis to the tune of damnation then, I warrant you, and that song hath a villanous burthen.

Hec. Come, my sweet sisters; let the air strike our tune
Whilst we show reverence to yon peeping moon.

[*The Witches dance and then exeunt.*"

I will conclude this account with Mr. Lamb's observations on the distinctive characters of these extraordinary and formidable personages, as they are described by Middleton or Shakspeare:

"Though some resemblance may be traced between the Charms in Macbeth and the Incantations in this play, which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakspeare. His witches are distinguished from the witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman, plotting some dire mischief, might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These Witches can hurt the body; those have power over the soul. Hecate, in Middleton, has a son, a low buffoon: the Hags of Shakspeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them. Except Hecate, they have no names, which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties which Middleton has given to his Hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth. But in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They 'raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life.'"*

* Lamb's 'Specimens of English Dramatic Poets.' Vol. I. p. 187 Moxon, London.

LECTURE III.

On Marston, Chapman, Decker, and Webster.

The writers of whom I have already treated may be said to have been "no mean men;" those of whom I have yet to speak are certainly no whit inferior. Would that I could do them anything like justice! It is not difficult to give at least their seeming due to great and well-known names; for the sentiments of the reader meet the descriptions of the critic more than half way, and clothe what is perhaps vague and extravagant praise with a substantial form and distinct meaning. But in attempting to extol the merits of an obscure work of genius, our words are either lost in empty air, or are "blown stifling back" upon the mouth that utters them. The greater those merits are, and the truer the praise, the more suspicious and disproportionate does it almost necessarily appear; for it has no relation to any image previously existing in the public mind, and therefore looks like an imposition fabricated out of nothing. In this case, the only way that I know of is, to make these old writers (as much as can be) vouchers for their own pretensions, which they are well able to make good. I shall in the present lecture give some account of Marston and Chapman, and afterwards of Decker and Webster.

Marston is a writer of great merit, who rose to tragedy from the ground of comedy, and whose *forte* was not sympathy, either with the stronger or softer emotions, but an impatient scorn and bitter indignation against the vices and follies of men, which vented itself either in comic irony or in lofty invective. He was properly a satirist. He was not a favourite with his contemporaries nor they with him. He was first on terms of great intimacy, and afterwards at open war, with Ben Jonson; and he is most unfairly criticized in The Return from Parnassus, under the name of Monsieur Kinsayder, as a mere libeller and buffoon. Writers in their life-time do all they can to degrade and vilify

one another, and expect posterity to have a very tender care of their reputations! The writers of this age, in general, cannot however be reproached with this infirmity. The number of plays that they wrote in conjunction is a proof of the contrary; and a circumstance no less curious, as to the division of intellectual labour, than the cordial union of sentiment it implied. Unlike most poets, the love of their art surmounted their hatred of one another. Genius was not become a vile and vulgar pretence, and they respected in others what they knew to be true inspiration in themselves. They courted the applause of the multitude, but came to one another for judgment and assistance. When we see these writers working together on the same admirable productions, year after year, as was the case with Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton and Rowley, with Chapman, Decker, and Jonson, it reminds one of Ariosto's eloquent apostrophe to the Spirit of Ancient Chivalry, when he has seated his rival knights, Renaldo and Ferraw, on the same horse:

> "Oh ancient knights of true and noble heart,
> They rivals were, one faith they liv'd not under
> Besides, they felt their bodies shrewdly smart
> Of blows late given, and yet (behold a wonder)
> Thro' thick and thin, suspicion set apart,
> Like friends they ride, and parted not asunder,
> Until the horse with double spurring drived
> Unto a way parted in two, arrived."*

Marston's Antonio and Mellida is a tragedy of considerable force and pathos; but in the most critical parts, the author frequently breaks off or flags without any apparent reason but want of interest in his subject; and farther, the best and most affecting situations and bursts of feeling are too evidently imitations of Shakspeare. Thus the unexpected meeting between Andrugio and Lucio, in the beginning of the third act, is a direct counterpart of that between Lear and Kent, only much weakened: and the interview between Antonio and Mellida has a strong resemblance to the still more affecting one between Lear and Cordelia, and is most wantonly disfigured by the sudden introduction

* Sir John Harrington's translation.

of half a page of Italian rhymes, which gives the whole an air of burlesque. The conversation of Lucio and Andrugio, again, after his defeat, seems to invite, but will not bear a comparison with Richard the Second's remonstrance with his courtiers, who offered him consolation in his misfortunes; and no one can be at a loss to trace the allusion to Romeo's conduct on being apprized of his banishment, in the termination of the following speech:

> "*Antonio.* Each man takes hence life, but no man death;
> He's a good fellow, and keeps open house;
> A thousand thousand ways lead to his gate,
> To his wide-mouthed porch: when niggard life
> Hath but one little, little wicket through.
> We wring ourselves into this wretched world
> To pule and weep, exclaim, to curse and rail,
> To fret and ban the fates, *to strike the earth*
> *As I do now.* Antonio, curse thy birth,
> And die."

The following short passage might be quoted as one of exquisite beauty and originality—

> —"As having clasp'd a rose
> Within my palm, the rose being ta'en away,
> My hand retains a little breath of sweet;
> So may man's trunk, his spirit slipp'd away,
> Hold still a faint perfume of his sweet guest."
>
> *Act IV, Scene* 1.

The character of Felice in this play is an admirable satirical accompaniment, and is the favourite character of this author (in all probability his own), that of a shrewd, contemplative cynic, and sarcastic spectator in the drama of human life. It runs through all his plays, is shared by Quadratus and Lampatho in 'What you Will,' (it is into the mouth of the last of these that he has put that fine invective against the uses of philosophy, in the account of himself and his spaniel, "who still slept while he baus'd leaves, tossed o'er the dunces, por'd on the old print"), and is at its height in the Fawn and Malevole, in his 'Parasitaster' and 'Malcontent.' These two comedies are his *chef-d'œuvres*. The character of the Duke Hercules of Ferrara, disguised as the Parasite, in the first of these, is well sustained throughout,

with great sense, dignity, and spirit. He is a wise censurer of men and things, and rails at the world with charitable bitterness. He may put in a claim to a sort of family likeness to the Duke, in 'Measure for Measure,' only the latter descends from his elevation to watch in secret over serious crimes; the other is only a spy on private follies. There is something in this cast of character (at least in comedy—perhaps it neutralizes the tone and interest in tragedy), that finds a wonderful reciprocity in the breast of the reader or audience. It forms a kind of middle term or point of union between the busy actors in the scene and the indifferent bystander, insinuates the plot, and suggests a number of good wholesome reflections, for the sagacity and honesty of which we do not fail to take credit to ourselves. We are let into its confidence, and have a perfect reliance on its sincerity. Our sympathy with it is without any drawback; for it has no part to perform itself, and "is nothing, if not critical." It is a sure card to play. We may doubt the motives of heroic actions, or differ about the just limits and extreme workings of the passions; but the professed misanthrope is a character that no one need feel any scruples in trusting, since the dislike of folly and knavery in the abstract is common to knaves and fools with the wise and honest! Besides the instructive moral vein of Hercules as the Fawn or Parasitaster, which contains a world of excellent matter most aptly and wittily delivered, there are two other characters perfectly hit off, Gonzago, the old prince of Urbino, and Granuffo, one of his lords in waiting. The loquacious, good-humoured, undisguised vanity of the one is excellently relieved by the silent gravity of the other. The wit of this last character (Granuffo) consists in his not speaking a word through the whole play; he never contradicts what is said, and only assents by implication. He is a most infallible courtier, and follows the prince like his shadow, who thus graces his pretensions.

"We would be private, only Faunus stay; he is a wise fellow, daughter, a very wise fellow, for he is still just of my opinion; my Lord Granuffo, you may likewise stay, for I know you'll say nothing."

And again, a little farther on, he says—

"Faunus. this Granuffo is a right wise good lord, a man of excellent dis-

course, and never speaks; his signs to me and men of profound reach instruct abundantly; he begs suits with signs, gives thanks with signs, puts off his hat leisurely, maintains his beard learnedly, keeps his lust privately, makes a nodding leg courtly, and lives happily."—"Silence," [replies Hercules,] "is an excellent modest grace; but especially before so instructing a wisdom as that of your Excellency."

The garrulous self-complacency of this old lord is kept up in a vein of pleasant humour; an instance of which might be given in his owning of some learned man, that "though he was no duke, yet he was wise;" and the manner in which the others play upon this foible, and make him contribute to his own discomfiture, without his having the least suspicion of the plot against him, is full of ingenuity and counterpoint. In the last scene he says, very characteristically,

"Of all creatures breathing, I do hate those things that struggle to seem wise, and yet are indeed very fools. I remember when I was a young man, in my father's days, there were four gallant spirits for resolution, as proper for body, as witty in discourse, as any were in Europe; nay, Europe had not such. I was one of them. We four did all love one lady; a most chaste virgin she was: we all enjoyed her, and so enjoyed her, that, despite the strictest guard was set upon her, we had her at our pleasure. I speak it for her honour, and my credit. Where shall you find such witty fellows now-a-days? Alas! how easy is it in these weaker times to cross love-tricks! Ha! ha! ha! Alas, alas! I smile to think (I must confess with some glory to mine own wisdom), to think how I found out, and crossed, and curbed, and in the end made desperate Tiberio's love. Alas! good silly youth, that dared to cope with age and such a beard!

Hercules. But what yet might your well-known wisdom think,
If such a one, as being most severe,
A most protested opposite to the match
Of two young lovers; who having barr'd them speech,
All interviews, all messages, all means
To plot their wished ends; even he himself
Was by their cunning made the go-between,
The only messenger, the token carrier;
Told them the times when they might fitly meet,
Nay, show'd the way to one another's bed?"

To which Gonzago replies, in a strain of exulting dotage

"May one have the sight of such a fellow for nothing? Doth there breathe such an egregious ass? Is there such a foolish animal in *rerum natura?* How is it possible such a simplicity can exist? Let us not lose our laughing

at him, for God's sake; let folly's sceptre light upon him, and to the Ship of Fools with him instantly.

Dondolo. Of all these follies I arrest your grace."

Molière has built a play on nearly the same foundation, which is not much superior to the present. Marston, among other topics of satire, has a fling at the pseudo-critics and philosophers of his time, who were "full of wise saws and modern instances." Thus he freights his Ship of Fools.

"*Dondolo.* Yes, yes; but they got a supersedeas; all of them proved themselves either knaves or madmen, and so were let go: there's none left now in our ship but a few citizens that let their wives keep their shop-books, some philosophers, and a few critics; one of which critics has lost his flesh with fishing at the measure of Plautus' verses; another has vowed to get the consumption of the lungs, or to leave to posterity the true orthography and pronunciation of laughing.

Hercules. But what philosophers ha' ye?

Dondolo. Oh, very strange fellows; one knows nothing, dares not aver he lives, goes, sees, feels.

Nymphadoro. A most insensible philosopher.

Dondolo. Another, that there is no present time; and that one man to-day and to-morrow, is not the same man; so that he that yesterday owed money, to-day owes none; because he is not the same man.

Herod. Would that philosophy hold good in law?

Hercul s. But why has the Duke thus laboured to have all the fools shipped out of his dominions?

Dondolo. Marry, because he would play the fool alone without any rival.

Act IV.

Molière has enlarged upon the same topic in his *Mariage Forcé*, but not with more point or effect. Nymphadoro's reasons for devoting himself to the sex generally, and Hercules's description of the different qualifications of different men, will also be found to contain excellent specimens, both of style and matter. The disguise of Hercules as the Fawn is assumed voluntarily, and he is comparatively a calm and dispassionate observer of the times. Malevole's disguise in the Malcontent has been forced upon him by usurpation and injustice, and his invectives are accordingly more impassioned and virulent. His satire does not "like a wild goose fly, unclaimed of any man," but has a bitter and personal application. Take him in the words of the usurping Duke's account of him:

"This Malevole is one of the most prodigious affections that ever conversed with Nature; a man, or rather a monster, more discontent than Lucifer when he was thrust out of the presence. His appetite is unsatiable as the grave, as far from any content as from heaven. His highest delight is to procure others vexation, and therein he thinks he truly serves heaven; for 'tis his position, whosoever in this earth can be contented is a slave, and damned; therefore does he afflict all, in that to which they are most affected. The elements struggle with him; his own soul is at variance with herself; his speech is halter-worthy at all hours. I like him, 'faith; he gives good intelligence to my spirit, makes me understand those weaknesses which others' flattery palliates. Hark! they sing

Enter MALEVOLE, *after the song.*

Pietro Jacomo. See he comes! Now shall you hear the extremity of a Malcontent; he is as free as air; he blows over every man. And—Sir, whence come you now?

Malevole. From the public place of much dissimulation, the church.

Pietro Jacomo. What didst there?

Malevole. Talk with a usurer; take up at interest.

Pietro Jacomo. I wonder what religion thou art of?

Malevole. Of a soldier's religion.

Pietro Jacomo. And what dost think makes most infidels now?

Malevole. Sects, sects. I am weary; would I were one of the Duke's hounds

Pietro Jacomo. But what's the common news abroad? Thou dogg'st rumour still.

Malevole. Common news? Why, common words are, God save ye, Fare ye well: common actions, flattery and cozenage: common things, women and cuckolds."

Act I. Scene 3.

In reading all this, one is somehow reminded perpetually of Mr. Kean's acting: in Shakspeare we do not often think of him, except in those parts which he constantly acts, and in those one cannot forget him. I might observe on the above passage, in excuse for some bluntness of style, that the ideal barrier between names and things seems to have been greater then than now. Words have become instruments of more importance than formerly. To mention certain actions, is almost to participate in them, as if consciousness were the same as guilt. The standard of delicacy varies at different periods, as it does in different countries, and is not a general test of superiority. The French, who pique themselves (and justly, in some particulars) on their quickness of tact and refinement of breeding, say and do things which we, a plainer and coarser people, could not think of without a

blush. What would seem gross allusions to us at present, were without offence to our ancestors, and many things passed for jests with them, or matters of indifference, which would not now be endured. Refinement of language, however, does not keep pace with simplicity of manners. The severity of criticism exercised in our theatres towards some unfortunate straggling phrases in the old comedies, is but an ambiguous compliment to the immaculate purity of modern times. Marston's style was by no means more guarded than that of his contemporaries. He was also much more of a free-thinker than Marlowe, and there is a frequent and not unfavourable allusion, in his works, to later sceptical opinions. In the play of the 'Malcontent' we meet with an occasional mixture of comic gaiety, to relieve the more serious and painful business of the scene, as in the easy loquacious effrontery of the old *intriguante* Maquerella, and in the ludicrous facility with which the idle courtiers avoid or seek the notice of Malevole, as he is in or out of favour; but the general tone and import of the piece is severe and moral. The plot is somewhat too intricate and too often changed (like the shifting of a scene,) so as to break and fritter away the interest at the end; but the part of Aurelia, the Duchess of Pietro Jacomo, a dissolute and proud-spirited woman, is the highest strain of Marston's pen. The scene in particular, in which she receives and exults in the supposed news of her husband's death, is nearly unequalled in boldness of conception and in the unrestrained force of passion, taking away not only the consciousness of guilt, but overcoming the sense of shame.*

Next to Marston, I must put Chapman, whose name is better known as the translator of Homer than as a dramatic writer. He is, like Marston, a philosophic observer, a didactic reasoner: but he has both more gravity in his tragic style, and more levity in his comic vein. His 'Bussy d'Ambois,' though not without interest or some fancy, is rather a collection of apophthegms or pointed sayings in the form of a dialogue, than a poem or a tragedy. In his verses the oracles have not ceased. Every other line is an axiom in morals—a libel on mankind, if truth is

* See conclusion of Lecture IV

a libel. He is too stately for a wit, in his serious writings—too formal for a poet. 'Bussy d'Ambois' is founded on a French plot and French manners. The character, from which it derives its name, is arrogant and ostentatious to an unheard-of degree, but full of nobleness and lofty spirit. His pride and unmeasured pretensions alone take away from his real merit; and by the quarrels and intrigues in which they involve him, bring about the catastrophe, which has considerable grandeur and imposing effect, in the manner of Seneca. Our author aims at the highest things in poetry, and tries in vain, wanting imagination and passion, to fill up the epic moulds of tragedy with sense and reason alone, so that he often runs into bombast and turgidity—is extravagant and pedantic at one and the same time. From the nature of the plot, which turns upon a love intrigue, much of the philosophy of this piece relates to the character of the sex. Milton says

"The way of woman's will is hard to hit."

But old Chapman professes to have found the clue to it, and winds his uncouth way through all the labyrinth of love. Its deepest recesses "hide nothing from his view." The close intrigues of court policy, the subtle workings of the human soul, move before him like a sea, dark, deep, and glittering with wrinkles for the smile of beauty. Fulke Greville alone could go beyond him in gravity and mystery. The plays of the latter (Mustapha and Alaham) are abstruse as the mysteries of old, and his style inexplicable as the riddles of the Sphinx. As an instance of his love for the obscure, the marvellous, and impossible, he calls up "the ghost of one of the old kings of Ormus," as a prologue to one of his tragedies; a very reverend and inscrutable personage, who, we may be sure, blabs no living secrets. Chapman, in his other pieces, where he lays aside the gravity of the philosopher and poet, discovers an unexpected comic vein, distinguished by equal truth of nature and lively good humour. I cannot say that this character pervades any one of his entire comedies; but the introductory sketch of Monsieur D'Olive is the undoubted prototype of that light, flippant, gay, and infinitely delightful class of character, of the professed men of wit and pleasure

about town, which we have in such perfection in Wycherly and Congreve, such as Sparkish, Witwoud, and Petulant, &c., both in the sentiments and in the style of writing. For example, take the last scene of the first act.

Enter D'OLIVE.

Rhoderique. What, Monsieur D'Olive, the only admirer of wit and good words.

D'Olive. Morrow, wits: morrow, good wits: my little parcels of wit, I have rods in pickle for you. How dost, Jack; may I call thee, sir, Jack yet?

Mugeron. You may, sir; sir's as commendable an addition as Jack, for aught I know.

D'Ol. I know it, Jack, and as common too.

Rhod. Go to, you may cover; we have taken notice of your embroidered beaver.

D'Ol. Look you: by heaven thou'rt one of the maddest bitter slaves in Europe: I do but wonder how I made shift to love thee all this while

Rhod. Go to, what might such a parcel-gilt cover be worth?

Mug. Perhaps more than the whole piece beside.

D'Ol. Good i'faith, but bitter. Oh, you mad slaves, I think you had Satyrs to your sires, yet I must love you, I must take pleasure in you, and i'faith tell me, how is't? live I see you do, but how? but how, wits?

Rhod. 'Faith, as you see, like poor younger brothers.

D'Ol. By your wits?

Mug. Nay, not turned poets, neither.

D'Ol. Good in sooth! But indeed, to say truth, time was when the sons of the Muses had the privilege to live only by their wits, but times are altered monopolies are now called in, and wit's become a free trade for all sorts to live by: lawyers live by wit, and they live worshipfully: soldiers live by wit, and they live honourably: panders live by wit, and they live honestly: in a word, there are but few trades but live by wit, only bawds and midwives by woman's labours, as fools and fiddlers do making mirth, pages and parasites by making legs, painters and players by making mouths and faces: ha, does't well, wits?

Rhod. 'Faith thou followest a figure in thy jests, as country gentlemen follow fashions, when they be worn threadbare.

D'Ol. Well, well, let's leave these wit skirmishes, and say when shall we meet?

Mug. How think you, are we not met now?

D'Ol. Tush, man! I mean at my chamber, where we may make free use of ourselves; that is, drink sack, and talk satire, and let our wits run the wild-goose chase over court and country. I will have my chamber the rendezvous of all good wits, the shop of good words, the mint of good jests, an ordinary of fine discourse; critics, essayists, linguists, poets, and other professors of

that faculty of wit, shall at certain hours i' th' day, resort thither; it shall be a second Sorbonne, where all doubts or differences of learning, honour, duelism, criticism, and poetry, shall be disputed: and how, wits, do ye follow the court still?

Rhod. Close at heels, sir; and I can tell you, you have much to answer to your stars, that you do not so too.

D'Ol. As why, wits? as why?

Rhod. Why, sir, the court's as 'twere the stage: and they that have a good suit of parts and qualities ought to press thither to grace them, and receive their due merit.

D'Ol. Tush, let the court follow me: he that soars too near the sun, melts his wings many times; as I am, I possess myself, I enjoy my liberty, my learning, my wit: as for wealth and honour, let 'em go; I'll not lose my learning to be a lord, nor my wit to be an alderman.

Mug. Admirable D'Olive!

D'Ol. And what! you stand gazing at this comet here, and admire it, I dare say.

Rhod. And do not you?

D'Ol. Not I, I admire nothing but wit.

Rhod. But I wonder how she entertains time in that solitary cell: does she not take tobacco, think you?

D'Ol. She does, she does: others make it their physic, she makes it her food: her sister and she take it by turn, first one, then the other, and Vandome ministers to them both.

Mug. How sayest thou by that Helen of Greece the Countess's sister? here were a paragon, Monsieur D'Olive, to admire and marry too.

D'Ol. Not for me.

Rhod. No! what exceptions lie against the choice?

D'Ol. Tush, tell me not of choice; if I stood affected that way, I would choose my wife as men do valentines, blindfold or draw cuts for them, for so I shall be sure not to be deceived in choosing; for take this of me, there's ten times more deceit in women than in horse flesh; and I say still, that a pretty well-paced chamber-maid is the only fashion; if she grows full or fulsome, give her but sixpence to buy her a hand-basket, and send her the way of all flesh, there's no more but so.

Mug. Indeed that's the savingest way.

D'Ol. O me! what a hell 'tis for a man to be tied to the continual charge of a coach, with the appurtenances, horses, men, and so forth: and then to have a man's house pestered with a whole country of guests, grooms, panders, waiting maids, &c. I careful to please my wife, she careless to displease me; shrewish if she be honest; intolerable if she be wise; imperious as an empress; all she does must be law, all she says gospel: oh, what a penance 'tis to endure her! I glad to forbear still, all to keep her loyal, and yet perhaps when all's done, my heir shall be like my horse-keeper: Fie on't! the very thought of marriage were able to cool the hottest liver in France.

Rhod. Well, I durst venture twice the price of your gilt coney's wool, we shall have you change your copy ere a twelvemonth's day.

Mug. We must have you dubb'd o' th' order; there's no remedy: you that have, unmarried, done such honourable service in the commonwealth, must needs receive the honour due to 't in marriage.

Rhod. That he may do, and never marry.

D'Ol. As how, wits? I 'faith as how?

Rhod. For if he can prove his father was free o' th' order, and that he was his father's son, then, by the laudable custom of the city, he may be a cuckold by his father's copy, and never serve for 't.

D'Ol. Ever good, i'faith!

Mug. Nay, how can he plead that, when 'tis as well known his father died a bachelor?

D'Ol. Bitter, in verity, bitter! But good still in its kind.

Rhod. Go to, we must have you follow the lantern of your forefathers.

Mug. His forefathers? 'Sbody, had he more fathers than one?

D'Ol. Why, this is right: here's wit canvast out on 's coat, into 's jacket: the string sounds ever well, that rubs not too much o' th' frets: I must love you, wits, I must take pleasure in you. Farewell, good wits: you know my lodging, make an errand thither now and then, and save your ordinary; do, wits, do.

Mug. We shall be troublesome t' ye.

D'Ol. O God, sir, you wrong me, to think I can be troubled with wit: I love a good wit as I love myself: if you need a brace or two of crowns at any time, address but your sonnet, it shall be as sufficient as your bond at all times: I carry half a score birds in a cage, shall ever remain at your call. Farewell, wits; farewell, good wits. [*Exit.*

Rhod. Farewell, the true map of a gull: by heaven he shall to th' court! 'tis the perfect model of an impudent upstart; the compound of a poet and a lawyer; he shall sure to th' court.

Mug. Nay, for God's sake, let's have no fools at court.

Rhod. He shall to 't, that 's certain. The duke had a purpose to dispatch some one or other to the French king, to entreat him to send for the body of his niece, which the melancholy Earl of St. Anne, her husband, hath kept so long unburied, as meaning one grave should entomb himself and her together.

Mug. A very worthy subject for an embassage, as D'Olive is for an ambassador agent; and 'tis as suitable to his brain, as his parcel-gilt beaver to his fool's head.

Rhod. Well, it shall go hard, but he shall be employed. Oh, 'tis a most accomplished ass; the mongrel of a gull, and a villain: the very essence of his soul is pure villany; the substance of his brain, foolery; one that believes nothing from the stars upward; a pagan in belief, an epicure beyond belief; prodigious in lust; prodigal in wasteful expense; in necessary, most penurious. His wit is to admire and imitate; his grace is to censure and detract; he shall to th' court, i faith he shall thither: I will shape such employment for him, as that he himself shall have no less contentment, in making mirth to the whole court, than the Duke and the whole court shall have pleasure in enjoying his presence. A knave, if he be rich, is fit to make an officer, as a fool, if he be a knave, is fit to make an intelligencer. [*Exeunt.*"

His 'May-day' is not so good. 'All Fools,' the 'Widow's Tears,' and 'Eastward Hoe,' are comedies of great merit, particularly the last. The first is borrowed a good deal from Terence, and the character of Valerio, an accomplished rake, who passes with his father for the person of the greatest economy and rusticity of manners, is an excellent idea, executed with spirit. 'Eastward Hoe' was written in conjunction with Ben Jonson and Marston; and for his share in it, on account of some allusions to the Scotch, just after the accession of James I., our author, with his friends, had nearly lost his ears. Such were the notions of poetical justice in those days! The behaviour of Ben Jonson's mother on this occasion is remarkable. "On his release from prison, he gave an entertainment to his friends, among whom were Camden and Selden. In the midst of the entertainment, his mother, more an antique Roman than a Briton, drank to him, and showed him a paper of poison, which she intended to have given him in his liquor, having first taken a portion of it herself, if the sentence for his punishment had been executed." This play contains the first idea of Hogarth's 'Idle and Industrious Apprentices'

It remains for me to say something of Webster and Decker. For these two writers I do not know how to show my regard and admiration sufficiently. Noble-minded Webster, gentle-hearted Decker, how may I hope to "express ye unblam'd," and repay to your neglected *manes* some part of the debt of gratitude I owe for proud and soothing recollections? I pass by the 'Appius and Virginia' of the former, which is however a good, sensible, solid tragedy, cast in a frame-work of the most approved models, with little to blame or praise in it, except the affecting speech of Appius to Virginia just before he kills her; as well as Decker's 'Wonder of a Kingdom,' his 'Jacomo Gentili,' that truly ideal character of a magnificent patron, and 'Old Fortunatus and his Wishing-cap,' which last has the idle garrulity of age, with the freshness and gaiety of youth still upon its cheek and in its heart. These go into the common catalogue, and are lost in the crowd; but Webster's 'Vittoria Corombona' I cannot so soon part with; and old honest Decker's Signior Orlando Friscobaldo I shall never forget! I became only of late acquainted with

this last-mentioned worthy character; but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life. We sometimes regret that we had not sooner met with characters like these, that seem to raise, revive, and give a new zest to our being. Vain the complaint! We should never have known their value, if we had not known them always: they are old, very old acquaintance, or we should not recognize them at first sight. We only find in books what is already written within "the red-leaved tables of our hearts." The pregnant materials are there; "the pangs, the internal pangs are ready; and poor humanity's afflicted will struggling in vain with ruthless destiny." But the reading of fine poetry may indeed open the bleeding wounds, or pour balm and consolation into them, or sometimes even close them up for ever! Let any one who has never known cruel disappointment, nor comfortable hopes, read the first scene between Orlando and Hippolito, in Decker's play of the 'Honest Whore,' and he will see nothing in it. But I think few persons will be entirely proof against such passages as some of the following:

"*Enter* Orlando Friscobaldo.

Omnes. Signior Friscobaldo.

Hippolito. Friscobaldo, oh! pray call him, and leave me; we two have business.

Carolo. Ho, Signior! Signior Friscobaldo, the Lord Hippolito.

[*Exeunt.*

Orlando. My noble Lord! the Lord Hippolito! The Duke's son! his brave daughter's brave husband! How does your honour'd Lordship? Does your nobility remember so poor a gentleman as Signior Orlando Friscobaldo? old mad Orlando?

Hip. Oh, sir, our friends, they ought to be unto us as our jewels; as dearly valued, being locked up and unseen, as when we wear them in our hands. I see, Friscobaldo, age hath not command of your blood; for all Time's sickle hath gone over you, you are Orlando still.

Orl. Why, my Lord, are not the fields mown and cut down, and stript bare, and yet wear they not pied coats again? Though my head be like a leek, white, may not my heart be like the blade, green?

Hip. Scarce can I read the stories on your brow,
Which age hath writ there: you look youthful still.

Orl. I eat snakes, my Lord, I eat snakes. My heart shall never have a wrinkle in it so long as I can cry Hem! with a clear voice. * * *

Hip. You are the happier man, sir.

Orl. May not old Friscobaldo, my Lord, be merry now, ha? I have a

little, have all things, have nothing. I have no wife, I have no child, have no chick, and why should I not be in my jocundare?

Hip. Is your wife then departed?

Orl. She's an old dweller in those high countries, yet not from me: here, she's here; a good couple are seldom parted.

Hip. You had a daughter, too, sir, had you not?

Orl. Oh, my Lord! this old tree had one branch, and but one branch, growing out of it: it was young, it was fair, it was straight: I pruned it daily, drest it carefully, kept it from the wind, helped it to the sun; yet for all my skill in planting, it grew crooked, it bore crabs: I hew'd it down. What's become of it I neither know nor care.

Hip. Then can I tell you what's become of it: that branch is withered.

Orl. So 'twas long ago.

Hip. Her name, I think, was Bellafront; she's dead.

Orl. Ha! dead?

Hip. Yes, what of her was left, not worth the keeping. Even in my sight, was thrown into a grave.

Orl. Dead! my last and best peace go with her! I see death's a good trencherman; he can eat coarse homely meat as well as the daintiest——Is she dead?

Hip. She's turn'd to earth.

Orl. Would she were turned to heaven. Umh! Is she dead? I am glad the world has lost one of his idols: no whoremonger will at midnight beat at the doors: in her grave sleep all my shame and her own; and all my sorrows, and all her sins.

Hip. I'm glad you are wax, not marble; you are made
Of man's best temper; there are now good hopes
That all these heaps of ice about your heart,
By which a father's love was frozen up,
Are thaw'd in those sweet show'rs fetch'd from your eye:
We are ne'er like angels till our passions die.
She is not dead, but lives under worse fate;
I think she's poor; and more to clip her wings
Her husband at this hour lies in the jail,
For killing of a man: to save his blood,
Join all your force with mine; mine shall be shown,
The getting of his life preserves your own.

Orl. In my daughter you will say! Does she live, then? I am sorry I wasted tears upon a harlot! but the best is, I have a handkerchief to drink them up, soap can wash them all out again. Is she poor?

Hip. Trust me, I think she is.

Orl. Then she's a right strumpet. I never knew one of their trade rich two years together; sieves can hold no water, nor harlots hoard up money; taverns, tailors, bawds, panders, fiddlers, swaggerers, fools, and knaves, do all wait upon a common harlot's trencher; she is the gallypot to which these drones fly: not for love to the pot, but for the sweet sucket in it, her money, her money.

Hip. I almost dare pawn my word her bosom gives warmth to no such snakes; when did you see her?

Orl. Not seventeen summers.

Hip. Is your hate so old?

Orl. Older; it has a white head, and shall never die till she be buried; her wrongs shall be my bedfellow.

Hip. Work yet his life, since in it lives her fame.

Orl. No, let him hang, and half her infamy departs out of the world; I hate him for her: he taught her first to taste poison; I hate her for herself, because she refused my physic.

Hip. Nay, but Friscobaldo.

Orl. I detest her, I defy both, she's not mine, she's——

Hip. Hear her, but speak.

Orl. I love no mermaids, I'll not be caught with a quail-pipe.

Hip. You're now beyond all reason. Is't dotage to relieve your child, being poor?

Orl. 'Tis foolery; relieve her! Were her cold limbs stretcht out upon a bier, I would not sell this dirt under my nails to buy her an hour's breath, nor give this hair unless it were to choke her.

Hip. Fare you well, for I'll trouble you no more. [*Exit.*

Orl. And fare you well, sir, go thy ways; we have few lords of thy making, that love wenches for their honesty.—'Las, my girl, art thou poor? Poverty dwells next door to despair, there's but a wall between them: despair is one of hell's catchpoles, and lest that devil arrest her, I'll to her; yet she shall not know me: she shall drink of my wealth as beggars do of running water, freely; yet never know from what fountain's head it flows. Shall a silly bird pick her own breast to nourish her young ones: and can a father see his child starve? That were hard: the pelican does it, and shall not I?"

The rest of the character is answerable to the beginning. The execution is, throughout, as exact as the conception is new and masterly. There is the least colour possible used; the pencil drags; the canvas is almost seen through: but then, what precision of outline, what truth and purity of tone, what firmness of hand, what marking of character! The words and answers all along are so true and pertinent, that we seem to see the gestures, and to hear the tone with which they are accompanied. So wher Orlando, disguised, says to his daughter, "You'll forgive me," and she replies, "I am not marble, I forgive you;" or again, when she introduces him to her husband, saying simply, "It is my father," there needs no stage-direction to supply the relenting tones of voice or cordial frankness of manner with which these words are spoken. It is as if there were some fine art to chisel

thought, and to embody the inmost movements of the mind in every-day actions and familiar speech. It has been asked,

> "Oh! who can paint a sun-beam to the blind,
> Or make him feel a shadow with his mind?"

But this difficulty is here in a manner overcome. Simplicity and extravagance of style, homeliness and quaintness, tragedy and comedy, interchangeably set their hands and seals to this admirable production. We find the simplicity of prose with the graces of poetry. The stalk grows out of the ground; but the flowers spread their flaunting leaves in the air. The mixture of levity in the chief character bespeaks the bitterness from which it seeks relief; it is the idle echo of fixed despair, jealous of observation or pity. The sarcasm quivers on the lip, while the tear stands congealed on the eye-lid. This "tough senior," this impracticable old gentleman softens into a little child; this choke-pear melts in the mouth like marmalade. In spite of his resolute professions of misanthropy, he watches over his daughter with kindly solicitude; plays the careful housewife; broods over her lifeless hopes; nurses the decay of her husband's fortune, as he had supported her tottering infancy; saves the high-flying Matheo from the gallows more than once, and is twice a father to them The story has all the romance of private life, all the pathos of bearing up against silent grief, all the tenderness of concealed affection:—there is much sorrow patiently borne, and then comes peace. Bellafront, in the two parts of this play taken together, is a most interesting character. It is an extreme, and I am afraid almost an ideal case. She gives the play its title, turns out a true penitent, that is, a practical one, and is the model of an exemplary wife. She seems intended to establish the converse of the position, that *a reformed rake makes the best husband*, the only difficulty in proving which, is, I suppose, to meet with the character. The change of her relative position, with regard to Hippolito, who, in the first part, in the sanguine enthusiasm of youthful generosity, has reclaimed her from vice, and in the second part, his own faith and love of virtue having been impaired with the progress of years, tries in vain to lure her back again to her former follies, has an effect the most striking and beautiful. The

pleadings on both sides, for and against female faith and constancy, are managed with great polemical skill, assisted by the grace and vividness of poetical illustration. As an instance of the manner in which Bellafront speaks of the miseries of her former situation, "and she has felt them knowingly," I might give the lines in which she contrasts the different regard shown to the modest or the abandoned of her sex:

> "I cannot, seeing she's woven of such bad stuff,
> Set colours on a harlot bad enough.
> Nothing did make me when I lov'd them best,
> To loath them more than this: when in the street
> A fair, young, modest damsel, I did meet,
> She seem'd to all a dove, when I pass'd by
> And I to all a raven: every eye
> That followed her, went with a bashful glance;
> At me each bold and jeering countenance
> Darted forth scorn: to her, as if she had been
> Some tower unvanquished, would they vail;
> 'Gainst me swoln rumour hoisted every sail.
> She crown'd with reverend praises, passed by them;
> I, though with face mask'd, could not 'scape the hem;
> For, as if heav'n had set strange marks on whores,
> Because they should be pointing-stocks to man,
> Drest up in civilest shape, a courtesan,
> Let her walk saint-like, noteless, and unknown,
> Yet she's betray'd by some trick of her own."

Perhaps this sort of appeal to matter of fact and popular opinion, is more convincing than the scholastic subtleties of the Lady in 'Comus.' The manner too, in which Infelice, the wife of Hippolito, is made acquainted with her husband's infidelity, is finely dramatic; and in the scene where she convicts him of his injustice by taxing herself with incontinence first, and then turning his most galling reproaches to her into upbraidings against his own conduct, she acquits herself with infinite spirit and address. The contrivance by which, in the first part, after being supposed dead, she is restored to life, and married to Hippolito, though perhaps a little far-fetched, is affecting and romantic. There is uncommon beauty in the Duke her father's description of her sudden illness. In reply to Infelice's declaration on reviving, "I'm well," he says,

"Thou wert not so e'en now. Sickness' pale hand
Laid hold on thee, ev'n in the midst of feasting:
And when a cup, crown'd with thy lover's health,
Had touch'd thy lips, a sensible cold dew
Stood on thy cheeks, as if that death had wept
To see such beauty altered."

Candido, the good-natured man of this play, is a character of inconceivable quaintness and simplicity. His patience and good-humour cannot be disturbed by anything. The idea (for it is nothing but an idea) is a droll one, and is well supported. He is not only resigned to injuries, but "turns them," as Falstaff says of diseases, "into commodities." He is a patient Grizzel out of petticoats, or a Petruchio reversed. He is as determined upon winking at affronts, and keeping out of scrapes at all events, as the hero of the 'Taming of the Shrew' is bent upon picking quarrels out of straws, and signalizing his manhood without the smallest provocation to do so. The sudden turn of the character of Candido, on his second marriage, is, however, as amusing as it is unexpected.

Matheo, "the high-flying" husband of Bellafront, is a masterly portrait, done with equal ease and effect. He is a person almost without virtue or vice, that is, he is in strictness without any moral principle at all. He has no malice against others, and no concern for himself. He is gay, profligate, and unfeeling, governed entirely by the impulse of the moment, and utterly reckless of consequences. His exclamation, when he gets a new suit of velvet, or a lucky run on the dice, "Do we not fly high," is an answer to all arguments. Punishment or advice has no more effect upon him, than upon the moth that flies into the candle. He is only to be left to his fate. Orlando saves him from it, as we do the moth, by snatching it out of the flame, throwing it out of the window, and shutting down the casement upon it.

Webster would, I think, be a greater dramatic genius than Decker, if he had the same originality; and perhaps is so, even without it. His 'White Devil' and 'Duchess of Malfy,' upon the whole, perhaps, come the nearest to Shakspeare of anything we have upon record; the only drawback to them, the only shade of imputation than can be thrown upon them, "by which

they lose some colour," is, that they are too like Shakspeare, and often direct imitations of him, both in general conception and individual expression. So far, there is nobody else whom it would be either so difficult or so desirable to imitate; but it would have been still better, if all his characters had been entirely his own, had stood out as much from others, resting only on their own naked merits, as that of the honest Hidalgo, on whose praises I have dwelt so much above. Decker has, I think, more truth of character, more instinctive depth of sentiment, more of the unconscious simplicity of nature; but he does not, out of his own stores, clothe his subject with the same richness of imagination, or the same glowing colours of language. Decker excels in giving expression to habitual, deeply-rooted feelings, which remain pretty much the same in all circumstances, the simple uncompounded elements of nature and passion:—Webster gives more scope to their various combinations and changeable aspects, brings them into dramatic play by contrast and comparison, flings them into a state of fusion by a kindled fancy, makes them describe a wider arc of oscillation from the impulse of unbridled passion, and carries both terror and pity to a more painful and sometimes unwarrantable excess. Decker is contented with the historic picture of suffering; Webster goes on to suggest horrible imaginings. The pathos of the one tells home and for itself; the other adorns his sentiments with some image of tender or awful beauty. In a word, Decker is more like Chaucer or Boccaccio; as Webster's mind appears to have been cast more in the mould of Shakspeare's, as well naturally as from studious emulation. The Bellafront and Vittoria Corombona of these two excellent writers, show their different powers and turn of mind. The one is all softness; the other "all fire and air." The faithful wife of Matheo sits at home drooping, "like the female dove, the whilst her golden couplets are disclosed;" while the insulted and persecuted Victoria darts killing scorn and pernicious beauty at her enemies. This White Devil (as she is called) is made fair as the leprosy, dazzling as the lightning. She is dressed like a bride in her wrongs and her revenge. In the trial scene in particular, her sudden indignant answers to the questions that are asked her, startle the

nearers. Nothing can be imagined finer than the whole conduct and conception of this scene, than her scorn of her accusers and of herself. The sincerity of her sense of guilt triumphs over the hypocrisy of their affected and official contempt for it. In answer to the charge of having received letters from the Duke of Brachiano, she says,

> "Grant I was tempted:—
> Condemn you me, for that the Duke did love me?
> So may you blame some fair and crystal river,
> For that some melancholic distracted man
> Hath drown'd himself in 't."

And again, when charged with being accessary to her husband's death, and showing no concern for it—

> "She comes not like a widow; she comes arm'd
> With scorn and impudence. Is this a mourning habit?"

she coolly replies,

> "Had I foreknown his death, as you suggest,
> I would have bespoke my mourning."

In the closing scene with her cold-blooded assassins, Lodovico and Gasparo, she speaks daggers, and might almost be supposed to exorcise the murdering fiend out of these true devils. Every word probes to the quick. The whole scene is the sublime of contempt and indifference.

> "*Vittoria.* If Florence be i' the Court, he would not kill me.
> *Gasparo.* Fool! Princes give rewards with their own hands,
> But death or punishment by the hands of others.
> *Lodovico* (*to* Flamineo). Sirrah, you once did strike me; I'll strike you
> Unto the centre.
> *Flam.* Thou'lt do it like a hangman, a base hangman,
> Not like a noble fellow, for thou see'st
> I cannot strike again.
> *Lod.* Dost laugh?
> *Flam.* Would'st have me die, as I was born, in whining?
> *Gasp.* Recommend yourself to Heaven.
> *Flam.* No, I will carry mine own commendations thither.
> *Lod.* O! could I kill you forty times a-day,
> And use 't four year together, 'twere too little:
> Nought grieves, but that you are too few to feed
> The famine of our vengeance. What do'st think on?

Flam. Nothing; of nothing: leave thy idle questions—
I am i' th' way to study a long silence.
To prate were idle: I remember nothing;
There's nothing of so infinite vexation
As man's own thoughts.
Lod. O thou glorious strumpet!
Could I divide thy breath from this pure air
When 't leaves thy body, I would suck it up,
And breathe 't upon some dunghill.
Vit. Cor. You my death's-man.
Methinks thou dost not look horrid enough;
Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman:
If thou be, do thy office in right form;
Fall down upon thy knees, and ask forgiveness.
Lod. O! thou hast been a most prodigious comet;
But I'll cut off your train: kill the Moor first.
Vit. Cor. You shall not kill her first; behold my breast;
I will be waited on in death: my servant
Shall never go before me.
Gasp. Are you so brave?
Vit. Cor. Yes, I shall welcome death
As princes do some great embassadours;
I'll meet thy weapon half way.
Lod. Thou dost not tremble!
Methinks, fear should dissolve thee into air.
Vit. Cor. O, thou art deceived, I am too true a woman!
Conceit can never kill me. I'll tell thee what,
I will not in my death shed one base tear
Or if look pale, for want of blood, not fear.
Gasp. (*to* Zanche). Thou art my task, black fury.
Zanche. I have blood
As red as either of theirs! Wilt drink some?
'Tis good for the falling sickness: I am proud
Death cannot alter my complexion,
For I shall ne'er look pale.
Lod. Strike, strike,
With a joint motion.
Vit. Cor. 'Twas a manly blow:
The next thou givest, murther some sucking infant,
And then thou wilt be famous."

Such are some of the *terrible graces* of the obscure, forgotten Webster. There are other parts of this play of a less violent, more subdued, and, if it were possible, even deeper character; such is the declaration of divorce pronounced by Brachiano on his wife:

"Your hand I'll kiss:
This is the latest ceremony of my love;
I'll never more live with you," &c.

which is in the manner of, and equal to, Decker's finest things: —and others, in a quite different style of fanciful poetry and bewildered passion; such as the lamentation of Cornelia, his mother, for the death of Marcello, and the parting scene of Brachiano; which would be as fine as Shakspeare, if they were not in a great measure borrowed from his inexhaustible store. In the former, after Flamineo has stabbed his brother, and Hortensio comes in, Cornelia exclaims,

"Alas! he is not dead; he's in a trance.
Why, here's nobody shall get anything by his death:
Let me call him again, for God's sake.

Hor. I would you were deceived.

Corn. O you abuse me, you abuse me, you abuse me! How many have gone away thus, for lack of 'tendance? Rear up's head, rear up's head; his bleeding inward will kill him.

Hor. You see he is departed.

Corn. Let me come to him; give me him as he is. If he be turned to earth, let me but give him one hearty kiss, and you shall put us both into one coffin. Fetch a looking-glass: see if his breath will not stain it; or pull out some feathers from my pillow, and lay them to his lips. Will you lose him for a little pains-taking?

Hor. Your kindest office is to pray for him.

Corn. Alas! I would not pray for him yet. He may live to lay me i' th' ground, and pray for me, if you'll let me come to him.

Enter BRACHIANO, *all armed, save the Bearer, with* FLAMINEO *and Page.*

Brach. Was this your handy-work?

Flam. It was my misfortune.

Corn. He lies, he lies; he did not kill him. These have killed him, that would not let him be better looked to.

Brach. Have comfort, my grieved mother.

Corn. O, yon screech-owl!

Hor. Forbear, good madame.

Corn. Let me go, let me go.

(*She runs to* Flamineo *with her knife drawn, and coming to him, lets it fall.*)

The God of Heaven forgive thee! Dost not wonder
I pray for thee? I'll tell thee what's the reason:
I have scarce breath to number twenty minutes;
I'd not spend that in cursing. Fare thee well!

Half of thyself lies there; and may'st thou live
To fill an hour-glass with his moulder'd ashes,
To tell how thou should'st spend the time to come
In b.est repentance.
Brach. Mother, pray tell me,
How came he by his death? What was the quarrel?
Corn. Indeed, my younger boy presumed too much
Upon his manhood, gave him bitter words,
Drew his sword first; and so, I know not how,
For I was out of my wits, he fell with 's head
Just in my bosom.
Page. This is not true, madam.
Corn. I pr'ythee, peace.
One arrow's graz'd already: it were vain
To lose this; for that will ne'er be found again."

This is a good deal borrowed from Lear; but the inmost folds of the human heart, the sudden turns and windings of the fondest affection, are also laid open with so masterly and original a hand, that it seems to prove the occasional imitations as unnecessary as they are evident. The scene where the Duke discovers that he is poisoned, is as follows, and equally fine:

"*Brach.* Oh! I am gone already. The infection
Flies to the brain and heart. O, thou strong heart,
There's such a covenant 'twcen the world and thee,
They're loth to part.
Giovanni. O my most lov'd father!
Brach. Remove the boy away:
Where's this good woman? Had I infinite worlds,
They were too little for thee. Must I leave thee? (*To* Vittoria.)
What say you, screech-owls? (*To the Physicians.*) Is the venom mortal?
Phy. Most deadly.
Brach. Most corrupted politic hangman!
You kill without book; but your art to save
Fails you as oft as great men's needy friends:
I that have given life to offending slaves,
And wretched murderers, have I not power
To lengthen mine own a twelve-month?
Do not kiss me, for I shall poison thee.
This unction is sent from the great Duke of Florence.
Francesco de Medici (*in disguise*). Sir, be of comfort.
Brach. O thou soft natural death! that art joint-twin
To sweetest slumber!—no rough-bearded comet
Stares on thy mild departure: the dull owl

Beats not against thy casement: the hoarse wolf
Scents not thy carrion Pity winds thy corse,
Whilst horror waits on princes.
Vit. Cor. I am lost for ever.
Brach. How miserable a thing it is to die
Mongst women howling! What are those?
Fl.am. Franciscans.
They have brought the extreme unction.
Brach. On pain of death, let no man name death to me:
It is a word most infinitely terrible.
Withdraw into our cabinet."

The deception practised upon him by Lodovico and Gasparo, who offer him the sacrament in the disguise of Monks, and then discover themselves to damn him, is truly diabolical and ghastly. But the genius that suggested it was as profound as it was lofty. When they are at first introduced, Flamineo says,

> "See, see how firmly he doth fix his eye
> Upon the Crucifix."

To which Vittoria answers,

> "Oh, hold it constant:
> It settles his wild spirits; and so his eyes
> Melt into tears."

The Dutchess of Malfy is not, in my judgment, quite so spirited or effectual a performance as the White Devil. But it is distinguished by the same kind of beauties, clad in the same terrors. I do not know but the occasional strokes of passion are even profounder and more Shakspearian; but the story is more laboured, and the horror is accumulated to an overpowering and insupportable height. However appalling to the imagination and finely done, the scenes of the madhouse to which the Duchess is condemned with a view to unsettle her reason, and the interview between her and her brother, where he gives her the supposed dead hand of her husband, exceed, to my thinking, the just bounds of poetry and of tragedy. At least, the merit is of a kind which, however great, we wish to be rare. A series of such exhibitions obtruded upon the senses or the imagination must tend to stupefy and harden, rather than to exalt the fancy

or meliorate the heart. I speak this under correction; but I hope the objection is a venial common-place. In a different style altogether are the directions she gives about her children in her last struggles:

> "I pr'ythee, look thou giv'st my little boy
> Some syrop for his cold, and let the girl
> Say her pray'rs ere she sleep. Now what death you please—"

and her last word, "Mercy," which she recovers just strength enough to pronounce; her proud answer to her tormentors, who taunt her with her degradation and misery—"But I am Duchess of Malfy still"*—as if the heart rose up, like a serpent coiled, to resent the indignities put upon it, and being struck at, struck again; and the staggering reflection her brother makes on her death, "Cover her face: my eyes dazzle: she died young!" Bosola replies:

> "I think not so; her infelicity
> Seem'd to have years too many.
> *Ferdinand.* She and I were twins.
> And should I die this instant, I had liv'd
> Her time to a minute."

This is not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical common-places, but the writhing and conflict, and the sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself!

The 'Revenger's Tragedy,' by Cyril Tourneur, is the only other drama equal to these and to Shakspeare, in "the dazzling fence of impassioned argument," in pregnant illustration, and in those profound reaches of thought which lay open the soul of feeling. The play, on the whole, does not answer to the expectations it excites; but the appeals of Castiza to her mother, who endeavours to corrupt her virtuous resolutions, "Mother, come

* "Am I not the Duchess?

Bosola. Thou art some great woman, sure; for riot begins to sit on thy forehead (clad in grey hairs) twenty years sooner than on a merry milkmaid's. Thou sleep'st worse than if a mouse should be forced to take up his lodging in a cat's ear: a little infant that breeds its teeth, should it lie with thee, would cry out, as if thou wert the more unquiet bed-fellow

Duch. I am Duchess of Malfy still."

from that poisonous woman there," with others of the like kind, are of as high and abstracted an essence of poetry, as any of those above mentioned.

In short, the great characteristic of the elder dramatic writers is, that there is nothing theatrical about them. In reading them you only think how the persons, into whose mouths certain sentiments are put, would have spoken or looked: in reading Dryden and others of that school, you only think, as the authors themselves seem to have done, how they would be ranted on the stage by some buskined hero or tragedy-queen. In this respect, indeed, some of his more obscure contemporaries have the advantage over Shakspeare himself, inasmuch as we have never seen their works represented on the stage; and there is no stage-trick to remind us of it. The characters of their heroes have not been cut down to fit into the prompt-book, nor have we ever seen their names flaring in the play-bills in small or large capitals.—I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think higher still of nature, and next to that of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had everywhere cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe everything to their authors, on this side barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt, while living, and with an epitaph, when dead! Michael Angelo is beyond the Alps; Mrs. Siddons has left the stage and us to mourn her loss. Were it not so, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres-royal on Salisbury-plain, where I write this; but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracts, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's "stern good-night." as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can "take mine ease at mine inn," beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands

with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood, are there; and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakspeare is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns, and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the Moon, that shines in at the window; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past, which might as well be forgotten! Mr. Wordsworth has expressed this sentiment well (perhaps I have borrowed it from him)—

> "Books, dreams, are both a world; and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good,
> Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness may grow.
> * * * * * *
> Two let me mention dearer than the rest,
> The gentle lady wedded to the Moor,
> And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.
>
> Blessings be with them and eternal praise,
> The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
> Of truth and pure delight in deathless lays.
> Oh, might my name be number'd among theirs,
> Then gladly would I end my mortal days!"

I have no sort of pretension to join in the concluding wish of the last stanza; but I trust the writer feels that this aspiration of his early and highest ambition is already not unfulfilled!

LECTURE IV.

On Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Ford, and Massinger.

Beaumont and Fletcher, with all their prodigious merits, appear to me the first writers who in some measure departed from the genuine tragic style of the age of Shakspeare. They thought less of their subject, and more of themselves, than some others. They had a great and unquestioned command over the stores both of fancy and passion; but they availed themselves too often of common-place extravagances and theatrical trick. Men at first produce effect by studying nature, and afterwards they look at nature only to produce effect. It is the same in the history of other arts, and of other periods of literature. With respect to most of the writers of this age, their subject was their master. Shakspeare was alone, as I have said before, master of his subject; but Beaumont and Fletcher were the first who made a play-thing of it, or a convenient vehicle for the display of their own powers. The example of preceding or contemporary writers had given them facility; the frequency of dramatic exhibition had advanced the popular taste; and this facility of production, and the necessity for appealing to popular applause, tended to vitiate their own taste, and to make them willing to pamper that of the public for novelty and extraordinary effect. There wants something of the sincerity and modesty of the older writers. They do not wait nature's time, or work out her materials patiently and faithfully, but try to anticipate her, and so far defeat themselves. They would have a catastrophe in every scene; so that you have none at last: they would raise admiration to its height in every line; so that the impression of the whole is comparatively loose and desultory. They pitch the characters at first in too high a key, and exhaust themselves by the eagerness and impatience of their efforts. We find all the prodigality of youth, the confidence inspired by success, an enthusiasm bordering on extravagance, richness running riot,

beauty dissolving in its own sweetness. They are like heirs just come to their estates, like lovers in the honey-moon. In the economy of nature's gifts they "misuse the bounteous Pan, and thank the Gods amiss." Their productions shoot up in haste, but bear the marks of precocity and premature decay. Or they are two goodly trees, the stateliest of the forest, crowned with blossoms, and with the verdure springing at their feet; but they do not strike their roots far enough into the ground, and the fruit can hardly ripen for the flowers!

It cannot be denied that they are lyrical and descriptive poets of the highest order; every page of their writings is a *florilegium:* they are dramatic poets of the second class, in point of knowledge, variety, vivacity, and effect; there is hardly a passion, character, or situation, which they have not touched in their devious range, and whatever they touched they adorned with some new grace or striking feature: they are masters of style and versification in almost every variety of melting modulation or sounding pomp, of which they are capable: in comic wit and spirit, they are scarcely surpassed by any writers of any age. There they are in their element, "like eagles newly baited;" but I speak rather of their serious poetry; and this, I apprehend, with all its richness, sweetness, loftiness, and grace, wants something—stimulates more than it gratifies, and leaves the mind in a certain sense exhausted and unsatisfied. Their fault is a too ostentatious and indiscriminate display of power. Everything seems in a state of fermentation and effervescence, and not to have settled and found its centre in their minds. The ornaments, through neglect or abundance, do not always appear sufficiently appropriate: there is evidently a rich wardrobe of words and images, to set off any sentiments that occur, but not equal felicity in the choice of the sentiments to be expressed; the characters in general do not take a substantial form, or excite a growing interest, or leave a permanent impression; the passion does not accumulate by the force of time, of circumstances, and habit, but wastes itself in the first ebullitions of surprise and novelty.

Besides these more critical objections, there is a too frequent mixture of voluptuous softness or effeminacy of character with horror in the subjects, a conscious weakness (I can hardly think

it wantonness) of moral constitution struggling with wilful and violent situations, like the tender wings of the moth, attracted to the flame that dazzles and consumes it. In the hey-day of their youthful ardour, and the intoxication of their animal spirits, they take a perverse delight in tearing up some rooted sentiment, to make a mawkish lamentation over it; and fondly and gratuitously cast the seeds of crimes into forbidden grounds, to see how they will shoot up and vegetate into luxuriance, to catch the eye of fancy. They are not safe teachers of morality: they tamper with it, like an experiment tried *in corpore vili;* and seem to regard the decomposition of the common affections, and the dissolution of the strict bonds of society, as an agreeable study and a careless pastime. The tone of Shakspeare's writings is manly and bracing; theirs is at once insipid and meretricious, in the comparison. Shakspeare never disturbs the grounds of moral principle; but leaves his characters (after doing them heaped justice on all sides) to be judged of by our common sense and natural feeling. Beaumont and Fletcher constantly bring in equivocal sentiments and characters, as if to set them up to be debated by sophistical casuistry, or varnished over with the colours of poetical ingenuity. Or Shakspeare may be said to "cast the diseases of the mind, only to restore it to a sound and pristine health:" the dramatic paradoxes of Beaumont and Fletcher are, to all appearance, tinctured with an infusion of personal vanity and laxity of principle. I do not say that this was the character of the men; but it strikes me as the character of their minds. The two things are very distinct. The greatest purits (hypocrisy apart) are often free livers; and some of the most unguarded professors of a general licence of behaviour, have been the last persons to take the benefit of their own doctrine, from which they reap nothing, but the obloquy, and the pleasure of startling their "wonder-wounded" hearers. There is a division of labour, even in vice. Some persons addict themselves to the speculation only, others to the practice. The peccant humours of the body or the mind break out in different ways. One man *sows his wild oats* in his neighbour's field: another on Mount Parnassus; from whence, borne on the breath of fame, they may hope to spread and fructify to distant times and re-

gions. Of the latter class were our poets, who, I believe, led unexceptionable lives, and only indulged their imaginations in occasional unwarrantable liberties with the Muses. What makes them more inexcusable, and confirms this charge against them, is, that they are always abusing "wanton poets," as if willing to shift suspicion from themselves.

Beaumont and Fletcher were the first, also, who laid the foundation of the artificial diction and tinselled pomp of the next generation of poets, by aiming at a profusion of ambitious ornaments, and by translating the commonest circumstances into the language of metaphor and passion. It is this misplaced and inordinate craving after striking effect and continual excitement that had at one time rendered our poetry the most vapid of all things, by not leaving the moulds of poetic diction to be filled up by the overflowings of nature and passion, but by swelling out ordinary and unmeaning topics to certain preconceived and indispensable standards of poetical elevation and grandeur.—I shall endeavour to confirm this praise, mixed with unwilling blame, by remarking on a few of their principal tragedies. If I have done them injustice, the resplendent passages I have to quote will set everything to rights.

The 'Maid's Tragedy' is one of the poorest. The nature of the distress is of the most disagreeable and repulsive kind; and not the less so because it is entirely improbable and uncalled for. There is no sort of reason, or no sufficient reason to the reader's mind, why the king should marry off his mistress to one of his courtiers, why he should pitch upon the worthiest for this purpose, why he should, by such a choice, break off Amintor's match with the sister of another principal support of his throne (whose death is the consequence), why he should insist on the inviolable fidelity of his former mistress to him after she is married, and why her husband should thus inevitably be made acquainted with his dishonour, and roused to madness and revenge, except the mere love of mischief and gratuitous delight in torturing the feelings of others, and tempting one's own fate The character of Evadne, however, her naked, unblushing impudence, the mixture of folly with vice, her utter insensibility to any motive but her own pride and inclination, her heroic su-

periority to any signs of shame or scruples of conscience from a recollection of what is due to herself or others, are well described, and the lady is true to herself in her repentance, which is owing to nothing but the accidental impulse and whim of the moment. The deliberate, voluntary disregard of all moral ties and all pretence to virtue, in the structure of the fable, is nearly unaccountable. Amintor (who is meant to be the hero of the piece) is a feeble, irresolute character: his slavish, recanting loyalty to his prince, who has betrayed and dishonoured him, is of a piece with the tyranny and insolence of which he is made the sport; and even his tardy revenge is snatched from his hands, and he kills his former betrothed and beloved mistress, instead of executing vengeance on the man who has destroyed his peace of mind and unsettled her intellects. The king, however, meets his fate from the penitent fury of Evadne; and on this account, the 'Maid's Tragedy' was forbidden to be acted in the reign of Charles II., as countenancing the doctrine of regicide. Aspatia is a beautiful sketch of resigned and heart-broken melancholy, and Calianax, a blunt, satirical courtier, is a character of much humour and novelty. There are striking passages here and there, but fewer than in almost any of their plays. Amintor's speech to Evadne, when she makes confession of her unlooked-for remorse, is, I think, the finest:

——— "Do not mock me:
Though I am tame, and bred up with my wrongs,
Which are my foster-brothers, I may leap,
Like a hand-wolf, into my natural wildness,
And do an outrage. Prithee, do not mock me!"

'King and No King,' which is on a strangely chosen subject as strangely treated, is very superior in power and effect. There is an unexpected reservation in the plot, which, in some measure, relieves the painfulness of the impression. Arbaces is painted in gorgeous, but not alluring colours. His vain-glorious pretensions and impatience of contradiction are admirably displayed, and are so managed as to produce an involuntary comic effect to temper the lofty tone of tragedy, particularly in the scenes in which he affects to treat his vanquished enemy with such con-

descending kindness; and perhaps this display of upstart pride was meant by the authors as an oblique satire on his low origin, which is afterwards discovered. His pride of self will and fierce impetuosity are the same in war and in love. The haughty voluptuousness and pampered effeminacy of his character admit neither respect for his misfortunes, nor pity for his errors. His ambition is a fever in the blood; and his love is a sudden transport of ungovernable caprice that brooks no restraint, and is intoxicated with the lust of power, even in the lap of pleasure, and the sanctuary of the affections. The passion of Panthea is, as it were, a reflection from, and lighted at the shrine of her lover's flagrant vanity. In the elevation of his rank, and in the consciousness of his personal accomplishments, he seems firmly persuaded (and by sympathy to persuade others) that there is nothing in the world which can be an object of liking or admiration but himself. The first birth and declaration of this perverted sentiment to himself, when he meets with Panthea after his return from conquest, fostered by his presumptuous infatuation and the heat of his inflammable passions, and the fierce and lordly tone in which he repels the suggestion of the natural obstacles to his sudden phrenzy, are in Beaumont and Fletcher's most daring manner; but the rest is not equal. What may be called the love scenes are equally gross and common-place; and instead of any thing like delicacy or a struggle of different feelings, have all the indecency and familiarity of a brothel. Bessus, a comic character in this play, is a swaggering coward, something between Parolles and Falstaff.

The 'False One' is an indirect imitation of Antony and Cleopatra. We have Septimius for Œnobarbus, and Cæsar for Antony. Cleopatra herself is represented in her girlish state, but she is made divine in

"Youth that opens like perpetual spring,"

and promises the rich harvest of love and pleasure that succeeds it. Her first presenting herself before Cæsar, when she is brought in by Sceva, and the impression she makes upon him, like a vision dropped from the clouds, or

"Like some celestial sweetness, the treasure of soft love,'

are exquisitely conceived. Photinus is an accomplished villain, well-read in crooked policy and quirks of state; and the description of Pompey has a solemnity and grandeur worthy of his unfortunate end. Septimius says, bringing in his lifeless head,

> "'Tis here, 'tis done! Behold, you fearful viewers,
> Shake, and behold the model of the world here,
> The pride and strength! Look, look again, 'tis finished!
> That that whole armies, nay, whole nations,
> Many and mighty kings, have been struck blind at,
> And fled before, wing'd with their fears and terrors,
> That steel War waited on, and fortune courted,
> That high-plum'd Honour built up for her own;
> Behold that mightiness, behold that fierceness,
> Behold that child of war, with all his glories,
> By this poor hand made breathless!"

And again Cæsar says of him, who was his mortal enemy (it was not held in the fashion in those days, nor will it be held so in time to come, to lampoon those whom you have vanquished)—

> —— "Oh, thou conqueror,
> Thou glory of the world once, now the pity,
> Thou awe of nations, wherefore didst thou fall thus?
> What poor fate followed thee, and plucked thee on
> To trust thy sacred life to an Egyptian?
> The life and light of Rome to a blind stranger,
> That honourable war ne'er taught a nobleness,
> Nor worthy circumstance show'd what a man was?
> That never heard thy name sung but in banquets,
> And loose lascivious pleasures?—to a boy,
> That had no faith to comprehend thy greatness,
> No study of thy life to know thy goodness?
> Egyptians, do you think your highest pyramids,
> Built to outdure the sun, as you suppose,
> Where your unworthy kings lie raked in ashes,
> Are monuments fit for him! No, brood of Nilus,
> Nothing can cover his high fame but heaven
> No pyramids set off his memories,
> But the eternal substance of his greatness,
> To which I leave him."

It is something worth living for, to write or even read such poetry as this is, or to know that it has been written, or that there have been subjects on which to write it!—This, of all Beaumont

and Fletcher's plays, comes the nearest in style and manner to Shakspeare, not excepting the first act of the 'Two Noble Kinsmen,' which has been sometimes attributed to him.

The 'Faithful Shepherdess,' by Fletcher alone, is "a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns." The author has in it given a loose to his fancy, and his fancy was his most delightful and genial quality, where, to use his own words,

> "He takes most ease, and grows ambitious
> Thro' his own wanton fire and pride delicious."

The songs and lyrical descriptions throughout are luxuriant and delicate in a high degree. He came near to Spenser in a certain tender and voluptuous sense of natural beauty; he came near to Shakspeare in the playful and fantastic expression of it. The whole composition is an exquisite union of dramatic and pastoral poetry; where the local descriptions receive a tincture from the sentiments and purposes of the speaker, and each character, cradled in the lap of nature, paints "her virgin fancies wild" with romantic grace and classic elegance.

The place and its employments are thus described by Chloe to Theno:

> —— "Here be woods as green
> As any air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As where smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
> As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
> Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
> Arbours o'ergrown with woodbine; caves, and dells
> Chuse where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
> Or gather rushes, to make many a ring
> For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
> How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
> First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
> She took eternal fire that never dies;
> How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
> His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
> Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
> Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
> To kiss her sweetest."

There are few things that can surpass in truth and beauty of allegorical description the invocation of Amaryllis to the God of Shepherds, Pan, to save her from the violence of the Sullen Shepherd, for Syrinx's sake:

——— "For her dear sake,
That loves the rivers' brinks, and still doth shake
In cold remembrance of thy quick pursuit!"

Or again, the friendly Satyr promises Clorin—

"Brightest, if there be remaining
Any service, without feigning
I will do it; were I set
To catch the nimble wind, or get
Shadows gliding on the green."

It would be a task no less difficult than this, to follow the flight of the poet's Muse, or catch her fleeting graces, fluttering her golden wings, and singing in notes angelical of youth, of love, and joy!

There is only one affected and ridiculous character in this drama, that of Thenot in love with Clorin. He is attached to her for her inviolable fidelity to her buried husband, and wishes her not to grant his suit, lest it should put an end to his passion. Thus he pleads to her against himself:—

——— "If you yield, I die
To all affection; 'tis that loyalty
You tie unto this grave I so admire;
And yet there's something else I would desire,
If you would hear me, but withal deny.
Oh Pan, what an uncertain destiny
Hangs over all my hopes! I will retire;
For if I longer stay, this double fire
Will lick my life up."

This is paltry quibbling. It is spurious logic, not genuine feeling. A pedant may hang his affections on the point of a dilemma in this manner; but nature does not sophisticate; or when she does, it is to gain her ends, not to defeat them.

The Sullen Shepherd turns out too dark a character in the

end, and gives a shock to the gentle and pleasing sentiments inspired throughout.

The resemblance of Comus to this poem is not so great as has been sometimes contended, nor are the particular allusions important or frequent. Whatever Milton copied, he made his own. In reading the Faithful Shepherdess, we find ourselves breathing the moonlight air under the cope of heaven, and wander by forest side or fountain, among fresh dews and flowers, following our vagrant fancies, or smit with the love of nature's works. In reading Milton's Comus, and most of his other works, we seem to be entering a lofty dome raised over our heads and ascending to the skies, and as if Nature and everything in it were but a temple and an image consecrated by the poet's art to the worship of virtue and true religion. The speech of Clorin, after she has been alarmed by the Satyr, is the only one of which Milton has made a free use:

> " And all my fears go with thee.
> What greatness or what private hidden power
> Is there in me to draw submission
> From this rude man and beast? Sure I am mortal:
> The daughter of a shepherd; he was mortal
> And she that bore me mortal; prick my hand,
> And it will bleed, a fever shakes me, and
> The self-same wind that makes the young lamb shrink,
> Makes me a-cold: my fear says, I am mortal.
> Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,
> And now I do believe it,) if I keep
> My virgin flow'r uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair.
> No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
> Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
> Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
> Draw me to wander after idle fires;
> Or voices calling me in dead of night
> To make me follow, and so tole me on
> Thro' mire and standing pools to find my ruin;
> Else, why should this rough thing, who never knew
> Manners, nor smooth humanity, whose heats
> Are rougher than himself, and more misshapen.
> Thus mildly kneel to me? Sure there's a pow'r
> In that great name of Virgin, that binds fast
> All rude uncivil bloods, all appetites
> That break their confines: ther strong Chastity!

Be thou my strongest guard, for here I'll dwell
In opposition against fate and hell!"

Ben Jonson's 'Sad Shepherd' comes nearer it in style and spirit, but still with essential differences, like the two men, and without any appearance of obligation. Ben's is more homely and grotesque. Fletcher's is more visionary and fantastical. I hardly know which to prefer. If Fletcher has the advantage in general power and sentiment, Jonson is superior in *naïveté* and truth of local colouring.

The 'Two Noble Kinsmen' is another monument of Fletcher's genius; and it is said also of Shakspeare's. The style of the first act has certainly more weight, more abruptness, and more involution, than the general style of Fletcher, with fewer softenings and fillings-up to sheathe the rough projecting points and piece the disjointed fragments together. For example, the compliment of Theseus to one of the Queens, that Hercules

"Tumbled him down upon his Nemean hide
And swore his sinews thaw'd"

at sight of her beauty, is in a bolder and more masculine vein than Fletcher usually aimed at. Again, the supplicating address of the distressed Queen to Hippolita,

—— "Lend us a knee:
But touch the ground for us no longer time
Than a dove's motion, when the head's pluck'd off'—

is certainly in the manner of Shakspeare, with his subtlety and strength of illustration. But, on the other hand, in what immediately follows, relating to their husbands left dead in the field of battle,

"Tell him if he i' th' blood-siz'd field lay swoln,
Showing the sun his teeth, grinning at the moon,
What you would do,"—

I think we perceive the extravagance of Beaumont and Fletcher, not contented with truth or strength of description, but hurried away by the love of violent excitement into an image of disgust

and horror, not called for, and not at all proper in the mouth into which it is put. There is a studied exaggeration of the sentiment, and an evident imitation of the parenthetical interruptions and breaks in the line, corresponding to what we sometimes meet in Shakspeare, as in the speeches of Leontes in 'The Winter's Tale;' but the sentiment is overdone, and the style merely mechanical. Thus Hippolita declares, on her lord's going to the wars,

> "We have been soldiers, and we cannot weep,
> When our friends don their helms, or put to sea,
> Or tell of babes broach'd on the lance, or women
> That have seethed their infants in (and after eat them)
> The brine they wept at killing 'em; then if
> You stay to see of us such spinsters, we
> Should hold you here for ever."

One might apply to this sort of poetry what Marvel says of some sort of passions, that it is

> "Tearing our pleasures with rough strife
> Through the iron gates of life."

It is not in the true spirit of Shakspeare, who was "born only heir to all humanity," whose horrors were not gratuitous, and who did not harrow up the feelings for the sake of making mere *bravura* speeches. There are also in this first act several repetitions of Shakspeare's phraseology; a thing that seldom or never occurs in his own works. For instance:

> —— "Past slightly
> *His careless execution*"—
> "*The very lees* of such, millions of rates
> Exceed *the wine* of others"—
> "Let *the event*,
> That *never-erring arbitrator*, tell us"—
> "Like *old importment's bastard.*"

There are also words that are never used by Shakspeare in a similar sense:—

> ——"All our surgeons
> *Convent* in their behoof"—
> "We *convent* nought else but woes."

in short, it appears to me that the first part of this play was written in imitation of Shakspeare's manner, but I see no reason to suppose that it was his, but the common tradition, which is by no means well established. The subsequent acts are confessedly Fletcher's, and the imitations of Shakspeare which occur there (not of Shakspeare's manner as differing from his, but as it was congenial to his own spirit and feeling of nature) are glorious in themselves, and exalt our idea of the great original which could give birth to such magnificent conceptions in another. The conversation of Palamon and Arcite in prison is of this description —the outline is evidently taken from that of Guiderius, Arviragus, and Bellarius, in 'Cymbelline,' but filled up with a rich profusion of graces that make it his own again.

"*Pal.* How do you, noble cousin?
Arc. How do you, Sir?
Pal. Why, strong enough to laugh at misery,
And bear the chance of war yet. We are prisoners,
I fear for ever, cousin.
Arc. I believe it;
And to that destiny have patiently
Laid up my hour to come.
Pal. Oh, cousin Arcite,
Where is Thebes now? Where is our noble country?
Where are our friends and kindreds? Never more
Must we behold those comforts; never see
The hardy youths strive for the games of honour,
Hung with the painted favours of their ladies,
Like tall ships under sail: then start amongst 'em,
And, as an east wind, leave 'em all behind us
Like lazy clouds, whilst Palamon and Arcite
Even in the wagging of a wanton leg,
Outstript the people's praises, won the garland,
Ere they have time to wish 'em ours. Oh, never
Shall we two exercise, like twins of honour,
Our arms again, and feel our fiery horses,
Like proud seas, under us! Our good swords now
(Better the red-eyed god of war ne'er wore)
Ravish'd our sides, like age, must run to rust,
And deck the temples of those gods that hate us:
These hands shall never draw 'em out like lightning,
To blast whole armies more.
Arc. No, Palamon,
Those hopes are prisoners with us: here we are,
And here the graces of our youth must wither,

Like a too timely spring: here age must find us,
And, which is heaviest, Palamon, unmarried;
The sweet embraces of a loving wife,
Loaden with kisses, arm'd with thousand Cupids,
Shall never clasp our necks! No issue know us,
No figures of ourselves shall we e'er see,
To glad our age, and like young eaglets teach 'em
Boldly to gaze against bright arms, and say,
Remember what your fathers were, and conquer!
The fair-eyed maids shall weep our banishments,
And in their songs curse ever-blinded fortune,
Till she for shame see what a wrong she has done
To youth and nature. This is all our world:
We shall know nothing here, but one another;
Hear nothing but the clock that tells our woes;
The vine shall grow, but we shall never see it:
Summer shall come, and with her all delights,
But dead-cold winter must inhabit here still.

Pal. 'Tis too true, Arcite! To our Theban hounds,
That shook the aged forest with their echoes,
No more now must we hallow; no more shake
Our pointed javelins, while the angry swine
Flies, like a Parthian quiver, from our rages,
Struck with our well-steel'd darts! All valiant uses
(The food and nourishment of noble minds)
In us two here shall perish; we shall die
(Which is the curse of honour) lazily,
Children of grief and ignorance.

Arc. Yet, cousin,
Even from the bottom of these miseries,
From all that fortune can inflict upon us,
I see two comforts rising, two mere blessings,
If the gods please to hold here; a brave patience,
And the enjoying of our griefs together.
Whilst Palamon is with me, let me perish
If I think this our prison!

Pal. Certainly,
'Tis a main goodness, cousin, that our fortunes
Were twinn'd together; 'tis most true, two souls
Put in two noble bodies, let 'em suffer
The gall of hazard, so they grow together,
Will never sink; they must not, say they could;
A willing man dies sleeping, and all's done.

Arc. Shall we make worthy uses of this place
That all men hate so much?

Pal. How, gentle cousin?

Arc. Let's think this prison a holy sanctuary

To keep us from corruption of worse men
We 're young, and yet desire the ways of honour;
That, liberty and common conversation,
The poison of pure spirits, might, like women,
Woo us to wander from. What worthy blessing
Can be, but our imaginations
May make it ours? And here, being thus together
We are an endless mine to one another,
We 're father, friends, acquaintance;
We are, in one another, families;
I am your heir, and you are mine; this place
Is our inheritance; no hard oppressor
Dare take this from us; here, with a little patience,
We shall live long, and loving; no surfeits seek us:
The hand of war hurts none here, nor the seas
Swallow their youth; were we at liberty,
A wife might part us lawfully, or business;
Quarrels consume us; envy of ill men
Crave our acquaintance; I might sicken, cousin
Where you should never know it, and so perish
Without your noble hand to close mine eyes,
Or prayers to the gods: a thousand chances,
Were we from hence, would sever us.

Pal. You have made me
(I thank you, cousin Arcite) almost wanton
With my captivity; what a misery
It is to live abroad, and everywhere!
'Tis like a beast, methinks! I find the court here,
I'm sure a more content; and all those pleasures,
That woo the wills of men to vanity,
I see through now; and am sufficient
To tell the world 'tis but a gaudy shadow
That old Time, as he passes by, takes with him.
What had we been, old in the court of Creon,
Where sin is justice, lust and ignorance
The virtues of the great ones? Cousin Arcite,
Had not the loving gods found this place for us,
We had died as they now, ill old men unwept,
And had their epitaphs,—the people's curses!
Shall I say more?

Arc. I would hear you still

Pal. You shall.
Is there the record of any two that lov'd
Better than we do, Arcite?

Arc. Sure there cannot.

Pal. I do not think it possible our friendship
Should ever leave us.

Arc. Till our deaths it cannot."

Thus they "sing their bondage freely;" but just then enters Emilia, who parts all this friendship between them, and turns them to deadliest foes.

The jailor's daughter, who falls in love with Palamon, and goes mad, is a wretched interpolation in the story, and a fantastic copy of Ophelia. But they readily availed themselves of all the dramatic common-places to be found in Shakspeare,—love, madness, processions, sports, imprisonment, &c., and copied him too often in earnest, to have a right to parody him, as they sometimes did, in jest. The story of 'The Two Noble Kinsmen' is taken from Chaucer's 'Palamon and Arcite;' but the latter part, which in Chaucer is full of dramatic power and interest, degenerates in the play into a mere narrative of the principal events, and possesses little value or effect. It is not improbable that Beaumont and Fletcher's having dramatized this story, put Dryden upon modernizing it.

I cannot go through all Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas (52 in number), but I have mentioned some of the principal, and the excellences and defects of the rest may be judged of from these. 'The Bloody Brother', 'A Wife for a Month,' 'Bonduca,' 'Thierry and Theodoret,' are among the best of their tragedies: among the comedies, 'The Night Walker,' 'The Little French Lawyer,' and 'Monsieur Thomas,' come perhaps next to 'The Chances,' 'The Wild Goose Chase,' and 'Rule a Wife and Have a Wife.'—'Philaster, or, Love Lies a-Bleeding,' is one of the most admirable productions of these authors (the last I shall mention); and the patience of Euphrasia, disguised as Bellario, the tenderness of Arethusa, and the jealousy of Philaster, are beyond all praise. The passages of extreme romantic beauty and high-wrought passion that I might quote are out of number. One only must suffice, the account of the commencement of Euphrasia's love to Philaster:

——"Sitting in my window,
Printing my thought in lawn, I saw a God
I thought (but it was you) enter our gates;
My blood flew out, and back again as fast
As I had puffed it forth and suck'd it in
Like breath; then was I called away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man

> Heav'd from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, rais'd
> So high in thoughts as I: you left a kiss
> Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
> From you for ever. I did hear you talk
> Far above singing!"

And so it is our poets themselves write, "far above singing."* I am loth to part with them, and wander down, as we now must,

> "Into a lower world, to theirs obscure
> And wild—to breathe in other air
> Less pure, accustomed to immortal fruits."

Ben Jonson's serious productions are, in my opinion, superior to his comic ones. What he does, is the result of strong sense and painful industry; but sense and industry agree better with the grave and severe, than with the light and gay productions of the muse. "His plays were works," as some one said of them, "while others' works were plays." The observation had less of compliment than of truth in it. He may be said to mine his way into a subject, like a mole, and throws up a prodigious quantity of matter on the surface, so that the richer the soil in which he labours, the less dross and rubbish we have. His fault is, that he sets himself too much to his subject, and cannot let go his hold of an idea, after the insisting on it becomes tiresome or painful to others. But his tenaciousness of what is grand and lofty, is more praiseworthy than his delight in what is low and disagreeable. His pedantry accords better with didactic pomp than with illiterate and vulgar gabble; his learning, engrafted on romantic tradition or classical history, looks like genius.

> "Miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma."

He was equal, by an effort, to the highest things, and took the same, and even more successful pains to grovel to the lowest. He raised himself up or let himself down to the level of his sub-

* Euphrasia as the Page, just before speaking of her life, which Philaster threatens to take from her, says,

> —— "'Tis not a life;
> 'Tis but a piece of childhood thrown away."

What exquisite beauty and delicacy!

ject, by ponderous machinery. By dint of application, and a certain strength of nerve, he could do justice to Tacitus and Sallust no less than to mine host of the New Inn. His tragedy of 'The Fall of Sejanus,' in particular, is an admirable piece of ancient mosaic. The principal character gives one the idea of a lofty column of solid granite, nodding to its base from its pernicious height, and dashed in pieces by a breath of air, a word of its creator—feared, not pitied, scorned, unwept, and forgotten. The depth of knowledge and gravity of expression sustain one another throughout: the poet has worked out the historian's outline, so that the vices and passions, the ambition and servility of public men, in the heated and poisoned atmosphere of a luxurious and despotic court, were never described in fuller or more glowing colours. I am half afraid to give any extracts, less they should be tortured into an application to other times and characters than those referred to by the poet, Some of the sounds, indeed, may bear (for what I know) an awkward construction: some of the objects may look double to squint-eyed suspicion. But that is not my fault. It only proves that the characters of prophet and poet are implied in each other; that he who describes human nature well once, describes it for good and all, as it was, is, and, I begin to fear, will ever be. Truth always was, and must always remain, a libel to the tyrant and the slave. Thus Satrius Secundus and Pinnarius Natta, two public informers in those days, are described as

> "Two of Sejanus' blood-hounds, whom he breeds
> With human flesh, to bay at citizens."

But Rufus, another of the same well-bred gang, debating the point of his own character with two senators whom he has entrapped, boldly asserts, in a more courtly strain,

> —— "To be a spy on traitors
> Is honourable vigilance."

This sentiment of the respectability of the employment of a government spy, which had slept in Tacitus for near two thousand years, has not been without its modern patrons. The effects

of such "honourable vigilance" are very finely exposed in the following high-spirited dialogue between Lepidus and Arruntius, two noble Romans, who loved their country, but were not unfashionable enough to confound their country with its oppressors, and the extinguishers of its liberty.

"*Arr.* What are thy arts (good patriot, teach them me)
That have preserv'd thy hairs to this white dye,
And kept so reverend and so dear a head
Safe on his comely shoulders?
Lep. Arts, Arruntius!
None but the plain and passive fortitude
To suffer and be silent; never stretch
These arms against the torrent; live at home
With my own thoughts and innocence about me,
Not tempting the wolves' jaws: these are my arts.
Arr. I would begin to study 'em, if I thought
They would secure me. May I pray to Jove
In secret, and be safe? ay, or aloud?
With open wishes? so I do not mention
Tiberius or Sejanus! Yes, I must,
If I speak out. 'Tis hard, that. May I think,
And not be rack'd? What danger is't to dream?
Talk in one's sleep, or cough? Who knows the law?
May I shake my head without a comment? Say
It rains, or it holds up, and not be thrown
Upon the Gemonies? These now are things
Whereon men's fortunes, yea, their fate depends;
Nothing hath privilege 'gainst the violent ear.
No place, no day, no hour (we see) is free
(Not our religious and most sacred times)
From some one kind of cruelty; all matter,
Nay, all occasion pleaseth Madman's rage,
The idleness of drunkards, women's nothing,
Jesters' simplicity, all, all is good
That can be catch'd at."

'Tis a pretty picture; and the duplicates of it, though multiplied without end, are seldom out of request.

The following portrait of a prince besieged by flatterers (taken from 'Tiberius') has unrivalled force and beauty, with historic truth

—— "If this man
Had but a mind allied unto his words.

How blest a fate were it to us, and Rome?
Men are deceived, who think there can be thrall
Under a virtuous prince. Wish'd liberty
Ne'er lovelier looks than under such a crown.
But when his grace is merely but lip-good,
And that, no longer than he airs himself
Abroad in public, there to seem to shun
The strokes and stripes of flatterers, which within
Are lechery unto him, and so feed
His brutish sense with their afflicting sound,
As (dead to virtue) he permits himself
Be carried like a pitcher by the ears
To every act of vice; this is a case
Deserves our fear, and doth presage the nigh
And close approach of bloody tyranny.
Flattery is midwife unto princes' rage:
And nothing sooner doth help forth a tyrant
Than that, and whisperers' grace, that have the time,
The place, the power, to make all men offenders!"

The only part of this play in which Ben Jonson has completely forgotten himself (or rather seems not to have done so) is in the conversations between Livia and Eudemus, about a wash for her face, here called a *fucus*, to appear before Sejanus. 'Catiline's Conspiracy' does not furnish by any means an equal number of striking passages, and is spun out to an excessive length with Cicero's artificial and affected orations against Catiline, and in praise of himself. His apologies for his own eloquence, and declarations that in all his art he uses no art at all, put one in mind of Polonius's circuitous way of coming to the point. Both these tragedies, it might be observed, are constructed on the exact principles of a French historical picture, where every head and figure is borrowed from the antique; but, somehow, the precious materials of old Roman history and character are better preserved in Jonson's page than on David's canvas.

Two of the most poetical passages in Ben Jonson are the description of Echo in 'Cynthia's Revels,' and the fine comparison of the mind to a temple, in the 'New Inn;' a play which, on the whole, however, I can read with no patience.

I must hasten to conclude this Lecture with some account of Massinger and Ford, who wrote in the time of Charles I. I am sorry I cannot do it *con amore*. The writers of whom I have

chiefly had to speak were true poets, impassioned, fanciful, "musical as is Apollo's lute;" but Massinger is harsh and crabbed, Ford finical and fastidious. I find little in the works of these two dramatists, but a display of great strength or subtlety of understanding, inveteracy of purpose, and perversity of will. This is not exactly what we look for in poetry, which, according to the most approved recipes, should combine pleasure with profit, and not owe all its fascination over the mind to its power of shocking or perplexing us. The muses should attract by grace or dignity of mien. Massinger makes an impression by hardness and repulsiveness of manner. In the intellectual processes which he delights to describe, "reason panders will:" he fixes arbitrarily on some object which there is no motive to pursue, or every motive combined against it, and then, by screwing up his heroes or heroines to the deliberate and blind accomplishment of this, thinks to arrive at "the true pathos and sublime of human life." That is not the way. He seldom touches the heart, or kindles the fancy. It is in vain to hope to excite much sympathy with convulsive efforts of the will, or intricate contrivances of the understanding, to obtain that which is better left alone, and where the interest arises principally from the conflict between the absurdity of the passion and the obstinacy with which it is persisted in. For the most part, his villains are a sort of *lusus naturæ;* his impassioned characters are like drunkards or madmen. Their conduct is extreme and outrageous, their motives unaccountable and weak; their misfortunes are without necessity, and their crimes without temptation, to ordinary apprehensions. I do not say that this is invariably the case in all Massinger's scenes, but I think it will be found that a principle of playing at cross-purposes is the ruling passion throughout most of them. This is the case in the tragedy of 'The Unnatural Combat,' in 'The Picture,' 'The Duke of Milan,' 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts,' and even in 'The Bondman,' and 'The Virgin Martyr,' &c. In 'The Picture,' Matthias nearly loses his wife's affections, by resorting to the far-fetched and unnecessary device of procuring a magical portrait to read the slightest variation in her thoughts. In the same play, Honoria risks her reputation and her life to gain a clandestine interview with Matthias, merely to shake his fidelity

to his wife, and when she has gained her object, tells the king her husband in pure caprice and fickleness of purpose. 'The Virgin Martyr' is nothing but a tissue of instantaneous conversions to and from Paganism and Christianity. The only scenes of any real beauty and tenderness in this play, are those between Dorothea and Angelo, her supposed friendless beggar-boy, but her guardian angel in disguise, which are understood to be by Decker. The interest of 'The Bondman' turns upon two different acts of penance and self-denial, in the persons of the hero and heroine, Pisander and Cleora. In the Duke of Milan (the most poetical of Massinger's productions), Sforza's resolution to destroy his wife, rather than bear the thought of her surviving him, is as much out of the verge of nature and probability, as it is unexpected and revolting, from the want of any circumstances of palliation leading to it. It stands out alone, a pure piece of voluntary atrocity, which seems not the dictate of passion, but a start of phrensy; as cold-blooded in the execution as it is extravagant in the conception.

Again, Francesco, in this play, is a person whose actions we are at a loss to explain till the conclusion of the piece, when the attempt to account for them from motives originally amiable and generous, only produces a double sense of incongruity, and instead of satisfying the mind, renders it totally incredulous. He endeavours to seduce the wife of his benefactor, he then (failing) attempts her death, slanders her foully, and wantonly causes her to be slain by the hand of her husband, and has him poisoned by a nefarious stratagem, and all this to appease a high sense of injured honour, that "felt a stain like a wound," and from the tender overflowing of fraternal affection, his sister having, it appears, been formerly betrothed to, and afterwards deserted by, the Duke of Milan. Sir Giles Overreach is the most successful and striking effort of Massinger's pen, and the best known to the reader, but it will hardly be thought to form an exception to the tenor of the above remarks.* The same spirit of caprice and

* The following criticism on this play has appeared in another publication, but may be not improperly inserted here:

"'A New Way to Pay Old Debts' is certainly a very admirable play, and highly characteristic of the genius of its author, which was hard and forcible,

sullenness survives in Rowe's 'Fair Penitent,' taken from this author's 'Fatal Dowry.'

Ford is not so great a favourite with me as with some others, from whose judgment I dissent with diffidence. It has been la-

and calculated rather to produce a strong impression than a pleasing one. There is considerable unity of design and a progressive interest in the fable, though the artifice by which the catastrophe is brought about (the double assumption of the character of favoured lovers by Wellborn and Lovell) is somewhat improbable, and out of date; and the moral is peculiarly striking, because its whole weight falls upon one who all along prides himself in setting every principle of justice and all fear of consequences at defiance.

"The character of Sir Giles Overreach (the most prominent feature of the play, whether in the perusal, or as it is acted) interests us less by exciting our sympathy than our indignation. We hate him very heartily, and yet not enough; for he has strong, robust points about him that repel the impertinence of censure, and he sometimes succeeds in making us stagger in our opinion of his conduct, by throwing off any idle doubts or scruples that might hang upon it in his own mind, 'like dew-drops from the lion's mane.' His steadiness of purpose scarcely stands in need of support from the common sanctions of morality, which he intrepidly breaks through, and he almost conquers our prejudices by the consistent and determined manner in which he braves them. Self-interest is his idol, and he makes no secret of his idolatry: he is only a more devoted and unblushing worshipper at this shrine than other men. Self-will is the only rule of his conduct, to which he makes every other feeling bend: or rather, from the nature of his constitution, he has no sickly, sentimental obstacles to interrupt him in his headstrong career. He is a character of obdurate self-will, without fanciful notions or natural affections; one who has no regard to the feelings of others, and who professes an equal disregard to their opinions. He minds nothing but his own ends, and takes the shortest and surest way to them. His understanding is clear-sighted, and his passions strong-nerved. Sir Giles is no flincher, and no hypocrite; and he gains almost as much by the hardihood with which he avows his impudent and sordid designs as others do by their caution in concealing them. He is the demon of selfishness personified; and carves out his way to the objects of his unprincipled avarice and ambition with an arm of steel, that strikes but does not feel the blow it inflicts. The character of calculating, systematic self-love, as the master-key to all his actions, is preserved with great truth of keeping and in the most trifling circumstances. Thus ruminating to himself, he says, "I'll walk, to get me an appetite: 'tis but a mile; and exercise will keep me from being pursy!"—Yet, to show the absurdity and impossibility of a man's being governed by any such pretended exclusive regard to his own interest, this very Sir Giles, who laughs at conscience, and scorns opinion, who ridicules every thing as fantastical but wealth, solid, substantial wealth, and boasts of himself as having been the founder of his own fortune, by his contempt for every other consideration, is ready to sacrifice the whole of his

mented that the play of his which has been most admired ('Tis Pity She's a Whore') had not a less exceptionable subject. I do not know, but I suspect that the exceptionableness of the subject is that which constitutes the chief merit of the play. The re-

enormous possessions—to what?—to a title, a sound, to make his daughter 'right honourable,' the wife of a lord whose name he cannot repeat without loathing, and in the end he becomes the dupe of, and falls a victim to, that very opinion of the world which he despises!

"The character of Sir Giles Overreach has been found fault with as unnatural; and it may, perhaps, in the present refinement of our manners, have become in a great measure obsolete. But we doubt whether even still, in remote and insulated parts of the country, sufficient traces of the same character of wilful selfishness, mistaking the inveteracy of its purposes for their rectitude, and boldly appealing to power, as justifying the abuses of power, may not be found to warrant this an undoubted original—probably a facsimile of some individual of the poet's actual acquaintance. In less advanced periods of society than that in which we live, if we except rank, which can neither be an object of common pursuit nor immediate attainment, money is the only acknowledged passport to respect. It is not merely valuable as a security from want, but it is the only defence against the insolence of power. Avarice is sharpened by pride and necessity. There are then few of the arts, the amusements, and accomplishments, that soften and sweeten life, that raise or refine it: the only way in which any one can be of service to himself or another, is by his command over the gross commodities of life; and a man is worth just so much as he has. Where he who is not 'lord of acres' is looked upon as a slave and a beggar, the soul becomes wedded to the soil by which its worth is measured, and takes root in it in proportion to its own strength and stubbornness of character. The example of Wellborn may be cited in illustration of these remarks. The loss of his land makes all the difference between 'young master Wellborn' and 'rogue Wellborn;' and the treatment he meets with in this latter capacity is the best apology for the character of Sir Giles. Of the two, it is better to be the oppressor than the oppressed.

"Massinger, it is true, dealt generally in extreme characters, as well as in very repulsive ones. The passion is with him wound up to its height at first, and he never lets it down afterwards. It does not gradually arise out of previous circumstances, nor is it modified by other passions. This gives an appearance of abruptness, violence, and extravagance to all his plays. Shakspeare's characters act from mixed motives, and are made what they are by various circumstances. Massinger's characters act from single motives, and become what they are, and remain so, by a pure effort of the will, in spite of circumstances. This last author endeavoured to embody an abstract principle; labours hard to bring out the same individual trait in its most exaggerated state; and the force of his impassioned characters arises for the most part from the obstinacy with which they exclude every other feeling. Their vices look of a gigantic stature from their standing alone. Their actions seem extrava-

pulsiveness of the story is what gives it its critical interest; for it is a studiously prosaic statement of facts, and naked declaration of passions. It was not the least of Shakspeare's praise, that he never tampered with unfair subjects. His genius was above it; his taste kept aloof from it. I do not deny the power of simple painting and polished style in this tragedy in general, and of a great deal more in some few of the scenes, particularly in the quarrel between Annabella and her husband, which is wrought up to a pitch of demoniac scorn and phrensy with consummate art and knowledge; but I do not find much other power in the author (generally speaking) than that of playing with edged tools, and knowing the use of poisoned weapons. And what confirms me in this opinion is the comparative inefficiency of his other plays. Except the last scene of 'The Broken Heart' (which I think extravagant—others may think it sublime, and be right), they are merely exercises of style and effusions of wire-drawn sentiment. Where they have not the sting of illicit passion, they are quite pointless, and seem painted on gauze, or spun of cobwebs. The affected brevity and division of some of the lines into hemisticks, &c. so as to make in one case a

gant from their having always the same fixed aim—the same incorrigible purpose. The fault of Sir Giles Overreach, in this respect, is less in the excess to which he pushes a favourite propensity, than in the circumstance of its being unmixed with any other virtue or vice.

"We may find the same simplicity of dramatic conception in the comic as in the tragic characters of the author. Justice Greedy has but one idea or subject in his head throughout. He is always eating, or talking of eating. His belly is always in his mouth, and we know nothing of him but his appetite; he is as sharpset as travellers from off a journey. His land of promise touches on the borders of the wilderness: his thoughts are constantly in apprehension of feasting or famishing. A fat turkey floats before his imagination in royal state, and his hunger sees visions of chines of beef, venison pasties, and Norfolk dumplings, as if it were seized with a calenture. He is a very amusing personage; and in what relates to eating and drinking, as peremptory as Sir Giles himself.—Marrall is another instance of confined comic humour, whose ideas never wander beyond the ambition of being the implicit drudge of another's knavery or good fortune. He sticks to his stewardship, and resists the favour of a salute from a fine lady, as not entered in his accounts. The humour of this character is less striking in the play than in Munden's personification of it. The other characters do not require any particular analysis. They are very insipid, good sort of people."

mathematical stair-case of the words and answers given to different speakers,* is an instance of frigid and ridiculous pedantry. An artificial elaborateness is the general characteristic of Ford's style. In this respect his plays resemble Miss Baillie's more than any others I am acquainted with, and are quite distinct from the exuberance and unstudied force which characterized his immediate predecessors. There is too much of scholastic subtlety, an innate perversity of understanding or predominance of will, which either seeks the irritation of inadmissible subjects, or to stimulate its own faculties by taking the most barren, and making something out of nothing, in a spirit of contradiction. He does not *draw along with* the reader: he does not work upon our sympathy, but on our antipathy or our indifference, and there is as little of the social or gregarious principle in his productions as there appears to have been in his personal habits, if we are to believe Sir John Suckling, who says of him, in the Sessions of the Poets—

> "In the dumps John Ford alone by himself sat
> With folded arms and melancholy hat."

I do not remember without considerable effort the plot or persons of most of his plays—'Perkin Warbeck,' 'The Lover's Melancholy,' 'Love's Sacrifice,' and the rest. There is little character, except of the most evanescent or extravagant kind (to which last class we may refer that of the sister of Calantha in 'The Broken Heart')—little imagery or fancy, and no action. It is but fair, however, to give a scene or two, in illustration of these remarks (or in confutation of them, if they are wrong), and I shall take the concluding one of 'The Broken Heart,' which is held up as the author's master-piece.

* "*Ithocles.* Soft peace enrich this room.
Orgilus. How fares the lady?
Philema. Dead!
Christalla. Dead!
Philema. Starv'd!
Christalla. Starv'd!
Ithocles. Me miserable!"

"SCENE—*A Room in the Palace.*

A Flourish.—Enter EUPHRANEA, *led by* GRONEAS *and* HEMOPHIL: PROPHILUS *led by* CHRISTALLA *and* PHILEMA: NEARCHUS *supporting* CALANTHA, CEOTOLON, *and* AMELUS.

Cal. We miss our servants, Ithocles and Orgilus. On whom attend they?

Crot. My son, gracious princess,
Whisper'd some new device, to which these revels
Should be but usher: wherein I conceive
Lord Ithocles and he himself are actors.

Cal. A fair excuse for absence. As for Bassanes,
Delights to him are troublesome. Armostes
Is with the king?

Crot. He is.

Cal. On to the dance!
Cousin, hand you the bride: the bridegroom must be
Entrusted to my courtship. Be not jealous,
Euphranea; I shall scarcely prove a temptress.
Fall to our dance!

(*They dance the first change, during which enter* ARMOSTES.)

Arm. (*In a whisper to* Calantha.) The king your father's dead.

Cal. To the other change.

Arm. Is't possible?

They dance the second change.—Enter BASSANES

Bass. (*Whispers* Calantha). Oh! Madam,
Penthea, poor Penthea's starv'd.

Cal. Beshrew thee!
Lead to the next!

Bass. Amazement dulls my senses.

They dance the third change.—Enter ORGILUS.

Org. Brave Ithocles is murder'd, murder'd cruelly.

Cal. How dull this music sounds! Strike up more sprightly
Our footings are not active like our heart,*
Which treads the nimbler measure,

Org. I am thunderstruck.

The last change.

Cal. So; let us breathe awhile. (*Music ceases.*) Hath not this motion
Rais'd fresher colours on our cheek?

Near. Sweet princess,
A perfect purity of blood enamels
The beauty of your white.

Cal. We all look cheerfully:
And, cousin, 'tis, methinks, a rare presumption

* "High as our heart."—See passage from the 'Malcontent.'

In any who prefers our lawful pleasures
Before their own sour censure, to interrupt
The custom of this ceremony bluntly.
Near. None dares, lady.
Cal. Yes, yes; some hollow voice deliver'd to me
How that the king was dead.
Arm. The king is dead," &c. &c.

This, I confess, appears to me to be tragedy in masquerade. Nor is it, I think, accounted for, though it may be in part redeemed by her solemn address at the altar to the dead body of her husband.

" *Cal.* Forgive me. Now I turn to thee, thou shadow
Of my contracted lord! Bear witness all,
I put my mother's wedding-ring upon
His finger; 'twas my father's last bequest:
(*Places a ring on the finger of* ITHOCLES.)
Thus I new marry him, whose wife I am:
Death shall not separate us. Oh, my lords,
I but deceived your eyes with antic gesture,
When one news strait came huddling on another
Of death, and death, and death: still I danced forward;
But it struck home and here, and in an instant.
Be such mere women, who with shrieks and outcries
Can vow a present end to all their sorrows,
Yet live to court new pleasures, and outlive them:
They are the silent griefs which cut the heartstrings:
Let me die smiling.
Near. 'Tis a truth too ominous.
Cal. One kiss on these cold lips—my last: crack, crack
Argos, now Sparta's king, command the voices
Which wait at th' altar, now to sing the song
I fitted for my end."

And then, after the song, she dies.

This is the true false gallop of sentiment: anything more artificial and mechanical I cannot conceive. The boldness of the attempt, however, the very extravagance, might argue the reliance of the author on the truth of feeling prompting him to hazard it; but the whole scene is a forced transposition of that already alluded to in Marston's 'Malcontent.' Even the form of the stage directions is the same.

Enter MENDOZO, *supporting the* DUCHESS; GUERRINO; *the Ladies that are on the stage rise.* FERRARDO *ushers in the* DUCHESS; *then takes a Lady to tread a measure.*

Aurelia. We will dance. Music! we will dance. * *

Enter PREPASSO.

Who saw the Duke? the Duke?

Aurelia. Music!

Prepassa. The Duke? is the Duke returned?

Aurelia. Music!

Enter CELSO.

The Duke is quite invisible, or else is not.

Aurelia. We are not pleased with your intrusion upon our private retirement; we are not pleased: you have forgot yourselves.

Enter a PAGE.

Celso. Boy, thy master? where's the Duke?

Page. Alas, I left him burying the earth with his spread joyless limbs; he told me he was heavy, would sleep: bid me walk off, for the strength of fantasy oft made him talk in his dreams: I strait obeyed, nor ever saw him since; but wheresoe'er he is, he's sad.

Aurelia. Music, sound high, as is our heart; sound high.

Enter MALEVOLE *and her Husband, disguised like a Hermit.*

Malevole. The Duke? Peace, the Duke is dead.

Aurelia. Music!" *Act IV. Scene* 3.

The passage in Ford appears to me an ill-judged copy from this. That a woman should call for music, and dance on in spite of the death of her husband whom she hates, without regard to common decency, is but too possible: that she should dance on with the same heroic perseverance in spite of the death of her husband, of her father, and of every one else whom she loves, from regard to common courtesy or appearance, is not surely natural. The passions may silence the voice of humanity, but it is, I think, equally against probability and decorum to make both the passions and the voice of humanity give way (as in the example of Calantha) to a mere form of outward behaviour. Such a suppression of the strongest and most uncontroulable feelings can only be justified from necessity, for some great purpose, which is not the case in Ford's play; or it must be done for the effect and *eclat* of the thing, which is not fortitude but affectation. Mr. Lamb, in his impressive eulogy on this passage in 'The

Broken Heart,' has failed (as far as I can judge) in establishing the parallel between this uncalled-for exhibition of stoicism, and the story of the Spartan boy.

It may be proper to remark here, that most of the great men of the period I have treated of (except the greatest of all, and one other,) were men of classical education. They were learned men in an unlettered age; not self-taught men in a literary and critical age. This circumstance should be taken into the account in a theory of the dramatic genius of that age. Except Shakspeare, nearly all of them, indeed, came up from Oxford or Cambridge, and immediately began to write for the stage. No wonder. The first coming up to London in those days must have had a singular effect upon a young man of genius, almost like visiting Babylon or Susa, or a journey to the other world. The stage (even as it then was,) after the recluseness and austerity of a college life, must have appeared like Armida's enchanted palace, and its gay votaries like

> "Fairy elves beyond the Indian mount,
> Whose midnight revels, by a forest side
> Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees; while overhead the moon
> Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
> Wheels her pale course: they on their mirth and dance
> Intent, with jocund music charm his ear:
> At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds."

So our young novices must have felt when they first saw the magic of the scene, and heard its syren sounds with rustic wonder and the scholar's pride: and the joy that streamed from their eyes at that fantastic vision, at that gaudy shadow of life, of all its business and all its pleasures. and kindled their enthusiasm to join the mimic throng, still has left a long lingering glory behind it; and though now "deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue," lives in their eloquent page, "informed with music, sentiment, and thought, never to die!"

LECTURE V.

On Single Plays, Poems, &c.—The Four P s, The Return from Parnassus, Gammer Gurton's Needle, and other Works.

I SHALL, in this lecture, turn back to give some account of single plays, poems, &c.; the authors of which are either not known or not very eminent, and the productions themselves, in general, more remarkable for their singularity, or as specimens of the style and manners of the age, than for their intrinsic merit or poetical excellence. There are many more works of this kind, however, remaining, than I can pretend to give an account of; and what I shall chiefly aim at, will be to excite the curiosity of the reader, rather than to satisfy it.

'The Four P's' is an interlude, or comic dialogue, in verse, between a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Poticary, and a Pedlar, in which each exposes the tricks of his own and his neighbours' profession, with much humour and shrewdness. It was written by John Heywood, the Epigrammatist, who flourished chiefly in the reign of Henry VIII., was the intimate friend of Sir Thomas More, with whom he seems to have had a congenial spirit, and died abroad, in consequence of his devotion to the Roman Catholic cause, about the year 1565. His zeal, however, on this head, does not seem to have blinded his judgment, or to have prevented him from using the utmost freedom and severity in lashing the abuses of Popery, at which he seems to have looked "with the malice of a friend." 'The Four P's' bears the date of 1547 It is very curious, as an evidence both of the wit, the manners, and opinions of the time. Each of the parties in the dialogue gives an account of the boasted advantages of his own particular calling, that is, of the frauds which he practises on credulity and ignorance, and is laughed at by the others in turn. In fact, they all of them strive to outbrave each other, till the contest becomes a jest, and it ends in a wager who shall tell the greatest lie, when

the prize is adjudged to him who says that he had found a patient woman.* The common superstitions (here recorded) in civil and religious matters are almost incredible; and the chopped logic, which was the fashion of the time, and which comes in aid of the author's shrewd and pleasant sallies to expose them, is highly entertaining. Thus the Pardoner, scorning the Palmer's long pilgrimages and circuitous road to heaven, flouts him to his face, and vaunts his own superior pretensions:

"*Pard.* By the first part of this last tale,
It seemeth you came of late from the ale:
For reason on your side so far doth fail,
That you leave reasoning, and begin to rail.
Wherein you forget your own part clearly,
For you be as untrue as I:
But in one part you are beyond me,
For you may lie by authority,
And all that have wandered so far,
That no man can be their controller,
And where you esteem your labour so much
I say yet again, my pardons are such,
That if there were a thousand souls on a heap,
I would bring them all to heaven as good sheep,
As you have brought yourself on pilgrimage,
In the last quarter of your voyage,
Which is far a-this side heaven, by God:
There your labour and pardon is odd.
With small cost without any pain,
These pardons bring them to heaven plain:
Give me but a penny or two-pence,
And as soon as the soul departeth hence,
In half an hour, or three quarters at the most,
The soul is in heaven with the Holy Ghost."

The Poticary does not approve of this arrogance of the Friar, and undertakes, in mood and figure, to prove them both "false knaves." It is he, he says, who sends most souls to heaven, and who ought, therefore, to have the credit of it.

"No soul, ye know, entereth heaven-gate,
Till from the body he be separate:
And whom have ye known die honestly,

* Or, never known one otherwise than patient.

Without help of the Poticary?
Nay, all that cometh to our handling,
Except ye hap to come to hanging.
Since of our souls the multitude
I send to heaven, when all is view'd
Who should but I then altogether
Have thank of all their coming thither?"

The Pardoner here interrupts him captiously—

"If ye kill'd a thousand in an hour's space,
When come they to heaven, dying out of grace?"

But the Poticary, not so baffled, retorts—

"If a thousand pardons about your necks were tied;
When come they to heaven, if they never died
* * * * * * *
But when ye feel your conscience ready,
I can send you to heaven very quickly."

The Pedlar finds out the weak side of his new companions, and tells them very bluntly, on their referring their dispute to him, a piece of his mind.

"Now have I found one mastery,
That ye can do indifferently;
And it is neither selling nor buying,
But even only very lying."

At this game of imposture, the cunning dealer in pins and laces undertakes to judge their merits; and they accordingly set to work like regular graduates. The Pardoner takes the lead, with an account of the virtues of his relics; and here we may find a plentiful mixture of popish superstition and indecency. The bigotry of any age is by no means a test of its piety, or even sincerity. Men seemed to make themselves amends for the enormity of their faith by levity of feeling, as well as by laxity of principle; and in the indifference or ridicule with which they treated the wilful absurdities and extravagances to which they hood-winked their understandings, almost resembled children playing at blindman's-buff, who grope their way in the dark, and make blunders on purpose to laugh at their own idleness and

folly. The sort of mummery at which popish bigotry used to play at the time when this old comedy was written, was not quite so harmless as blindman's-buff: what was sport to her, was death to others. She laughed at her own mockeries of common sense and true religion, and murdered while she laughed. The tragic farce was no longer to be borne, and it was partly put an end to. At present, though her eyes are blind-folded, her hands are tied fast behind her, like the false Duessa's. The sturdy genius of modern philosophy has got her in much the same situation that Count Fathom has the old woman that he lashes before him from the robbers' cave in the forest. In the following dialogue of this lively satire, the most sacred mysteries of the Catholic faith are mixed up with its idlest legends by old Heywood, who was a martyr to his religious zeal, without the slightest sense of impropriety. The Pardoner cries out in one place (like a lusty Friar John, or a trusty Friar Onion)—

"Lo, here be pardons, half a dozen,
For ghostly riches they have no cousin
And, moreover, to me they bring
Sufficient succour for my living.
And here be relics of such a kind
As in this world no man can find.
Kneel down all three, and when ye leave kissing,
Who list to offer shall have my blessing.
Friends, here shall ye see, even anon,
Of All-Hallows the blessed jaw-bone.
Mark well this, this relic here is a whipper;
My friends unfeigned, here's a slipper
Of one of the seven sleepers, be sure.—
Here is an eye-tooth of the great Turk:
Whose eyes be once set on this piece of work,
May happily lose part of his eye-sight,
But not all till he be blind outright.
Kiss it hardly, with good devotion.
Pot. This kiss shall bring us much promotion:
Fogh! by St. Saviour, I never kiss'd a worse.
* * * * * * * *
For, by All-Hallows, yet methinketh
That All-Hallows' breath stinketh.
Palm. Ye judge All-Hallows' breath unknown·
If any breath stink, it is your own.

Pot. I know mine own breath from All-Hallows,
Or else it were time to kiss the gallows.
Pard. Nay, sirs, here may ye see
The great toe of the Trinity:
Who to this toe any money voweth,
And once may roll it in his mouth,
All his life after I undertake
He shall never be vex'd with the tooth-ache.
Pot. I pray you turn that relic about;
Either the Trinity had the gout,
Or else, because it is three toes in one,
God made it as much as three toes alone.
Pard. Well, let that pass, and look upon this:
Here is a relic that doth not miss
To help the least as well as the most:
This is a buttock-bone of Pentecost.
* * * * * * *
Here is a box full of humble-bees,
That stung Eve as she sat on her knees
Tasting the fruit to her forbidden:
Who kisseth the bees within this hidden,
Shall have as much pardon of right,
As for any relic he kiss'd this night.
Good friends, I have yet here in this glass,
Which on the drink at the wedding was
Of Adam and Eve undoubtedly:
If ye honour this relic devoutly,
Although ye thirst no whit the less,
Yet shall ye drink the more, doubtless.
After which drinking, ye shall be as meet
To stand on your head as on your feet."

The same sort of significant irony runs through the Apothecary's knavish enumeration of miraculous cures in his possession:

"For this medicine helpeth one and other,
And bringeth them in case that they need no other.
Here is a *syrapus de Byzansis*,—
A little thing is enough of this;
For even the weight of one scrippal
Shall make you as strong as a cripple.
These be the things that break all strife
Between man's sickness and his life.
From all pain these shall you deliver,
And set you even at rest for ever.
Here is a medicine no more like the same,

Which commonly is called thus by name.
Not one thing here particularly,
But worketh universally;
For it doth me as much good when I sell it,
As all the buyers that take it or smell it.
If any reward may entreat ye,
I beseech your mastership be good to me,
And ye shall have a box of marmalade,
So fine that you may dig it with a spade."

After these quaint but pointed examples of it Swift's boast with respect to the invention of irony,

"Which I was born to introduce,
Refin'd it first, and shew'd its use,

can be allowed to be true only in part.

The controversy between them being undecided, the Apothecary, to clench his pretensions "as a liar of the first magnitude," by a *coup de-grace*, says to the Pedlar, "You are an honest man;" but this home-thrust is somehow ingeniously parried. The Apothecary and Pardoner fall to their narrative vein again; and the latter tells a story of fetching a young woman from the lower world, from which I shall only give one specimen more as an instance of ludicrous and fantastic exaggeration. By the help of a passport from Lucifer, "given in the furnace of our palace," he obtains a safe conduct from one of the subordinate imps to his master's presence:

"The devil and I walked arm in arm
So far, till he had brought me thither,
Where all the devils of hell together
Stood in array in such apparel,
As for that day there meetly fell.
Their horns well gilt, their claws full clean,
Their tails well kempt and, as I ween,
With sothery butter their bodies anointed;
I never saw devils so well appointed.
The master-devil sat in his jacket,
And all the souls were playing at racket.
None other rackets they had in hand,
Save every soul a good fire-brand;
Wherewith they play'd so prettily,
That Lucifer laughed merrily.

And all the residue of the fiends
Did laugh thereat full well, like friends.
But of my friend I saw no whit,
Nor durst not ask for her as yet.
Anon all this rout was brought in silence,
And I by an usher brought to presence
Of Lucifer; then low, as well I could,
I kneeled, which he so well allow'd
That thus he beck'd, and by St. Antony
He smiled on me well-favour'dly,
Bending his brows as broad as barn-doors;
Shaking his ears as rugged as burrs;
Rolling his eyes as round as two bushels;
Flashing the fire out of his nostrils;
Gnashing his teeth so vain-gloriously,
That methought time to fall to flattery,
Wherewith I told, as I shall tell;
Oh pleasant picture! O prince of hell!" &c.

The piece concludes with some good wholesome advice from the Pedlar, who here, as well as in the poem of the 'Excursion,' performs the part of Old Morality; but he does not seem, as in the latter case, to be acquainted with the "mighty stream of Tendency." He is more full of "wise saws" than "modern instances;" as prosing, but less paradoxical!

"But where ye doubt, the truth not knowing,
Believing the best, good may be growing.
In judging the best, no harm at the least;
In judging the worst, no good at the best.
But best in these things, it seemeth to me,
To make no judgment upon ye;
But as the church does judge or take them,
So do ye receive or forsake them.
And so be you sure you cannot err,
But may be a fruitful follower."

Nothing can be clearer than this.

The 'Return from Parnassus' was "first publicly acted," as the title-page imports, "by the students in St. John's College, Cambridge." It is a very singular, a very ingenious, and, as I think, a very interesting performance. It contains criticisms on contemporary authors, strictures on living manners, and the earliest denunciation (I know of) of the miseries and unprofit-

ableness of a scholar's life. The only part I object to in our author's criticism is his abuse of Marston; and that, not because he says what is severe, but because he says what is not true of him. Anger may sharpen our insight into men's defects; but nothing should make us blind to their excellences. The whole passage is, however, so curious in itself (like the 'Edinburgh Review' lately published for the year 1755) that I cannot forbear quoting a great part of it. We find in the list of candidates for praise many a name—

"That like a trumpet makes the spirits dance;"

there are others that have long since sunk to the bottom of the stream of time, and no Humane Society of Antiquarians and Critics is ever likely to fish them up again.

"*Judicio.* Read the names.

Ingenioso. So I will, if thou wilt help me to censure them.

Edmund Spenser, John Davis,
Henry Constable, John Marston,
Thomas Lodge, Kit Marlowe,
Samuel Daniel, William Shakspeare;
Thomas Watson, and one Churchyard,
Michael Drayton, [who is consigned to an untimely grave.]

Good men and true, stand together, hear your censure: what's thy judgment of Spenser?

Jud. A sweeter swan than ever sung in Po;
A shriller nightingale than ever blest
The prouder groves of self-admiring Rome,
Blithe was each valley, and each shepherd proud,
While he did chaunt his rural minstrelsy.
Attentive was full many a dainty ear:
Nay, hearers hung upon his melting tongue,
While sweetly of his Faery Queen he sung,
While to the water's fall he tun'd her fame,
And in each bark engrav'd Eliza's name.
And yet for all, this unregarding soil
Unlaced the line of his desired life,
Denying maintenance for his dear relief;
Careless even to prevent his exequy,
Scarce deigning to shut up his dying eye.

Ing. Pity it is that gentler wits should breed,
Where thick-skinned chuffs laugh at a scholar's need.
But softly may our honour'd ashes rest,
That lie by merry Chaucer's noble chest.

But I pray thee proceed briefly in thy censure, that I may be proud of myself, as in the first, so in the last, my censure may jump with thine. Henry Constable, Samuel Daniel, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Watson.

Jud. Sweet Constable doth take the wondering ear,
And lays it up in willing prisonment:
Sweet honey-dropping Daniel doth wage
War with the proudest big Italian,
That melts his heart in sugar'd sonnetting.
Only let him more sparingly make use
Of others' wit, and use his own the more,
That well may scorn base imitation.
For Lodge and Watson, men of some desert,
Yet subject to a critic's marginal:
Lodge for his oar in every paper boat,
He that turns over Galen every day,
To sit and simper Euphues' legacy.

Ing. Michael Drayton.

Jud. Drayton's sweet Muse is like a sanguine dye,
Able to ravish the rash gazer's eye.

Ing. However, he wants one true note of a poet of our times; and that is this, he cannot swagger in a tavern, nor domineer in a pot-house. John Davis—

Jud. Acute John Davis, I affect thy rhymes,
That jerk in hidden charms these looser times:
Thy plainer verse, thy unaffected vein,
Is graced with a fair and sweeping train.

Ing. John Marston—

Jud. What, Monsieur Kinsayder, put up, man, put up for shame.
Methinks he is a ruffian in his style,
Withouten bands or garters' ornament.
He quaffs a cup of Frenchman's helicon,
Then royster doyster in his oily terms
Cuts, thrusts, and foins at whomsoe'er he meets,
And strews about Ram-alley meditations.
Tut, what cares he for modest close-couch'd terms
Cleanly to gird our looser libertines?
Give him plain naked words stript from their shirts
That might beseem plain-dealing Aretine.

Ing. Christopher Marlowe—

Jud. Marlowe was happy in his buskin'd Muse:
Alas! unhappy in his life and end.
Pity it is that wit so ill should dwell,
Wit lent from heaven, but vices sent from hell.

Ing. Our theatre hath lost, Pluto hath got
A tragic penman for a dreary plot.
Benjamin Jonson—

Jud. The wittiest fellow of a bricklayer in England.

Ing. A mere empiric, one that gets what he hath by observation, and makes only nature privy to what he endites: so slow an inventor, that he were better betake himself to his old trade of bricklaying; a blood whoreson, as confident now in making of a book, as he was in times past in laying of a brick.
William Shakspeare.
Jud. Who loves Adonis' love, or Lucrece' rape,
His sweeter verse contains heart-robbing life.
Could but a graver subject him content,
Without love's lazy foolish languishment."

This passage might seem to ascertain the date of the piece, as it must be supposed to have been written before Shakspeare had become known as a dramatic poet. Yet he afterwards introduces Kempe the actor talking with Burbage, and saying, "Few (of the University) pens play well: they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and of that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why, here's our fellow Shakspeare puts them all down; ay, and Ben Jonson too."—There is a good deal of discontent in all this; but the author complains of want of success in a former attempt, and appears not to have been on good terms with fortune. The miseries of a poet's life forms one of the favourite topics of 'The Return from Parnassus,' and are treated as if by some one who had "felt them knowingly." Thus Philomusus and Studioso chaunt their griefs in concert.

"*Phil.* Bann'd be those hours, when 'mongst the learned throng,
By Granta's muddy bank we whilom sung.
Stud. Bann'd be that hill which learned wits adore,
Where erst we spent our stock and little store.
Phil. Bann'd be those musty mews, where we have spent
Our youthful days in paled languishment.
Stud. Bann'd be those cozening arts that wrought our woe,
Making us wandering pilgrims to and fro.
Phil. Curst be our thoughts whene'er they dream of hope;
Bann'd be those haps that henceforth flatter us,
When mischief dogs us still, and still for aye,
From our first birth until our burying day.
In our first gamesome age, our doting sires
Carked and car'd to have us lettered:
Sent us to Cambridge where our oil is spent:
Us our kind college from the teat did tent,
And forced us walk before we weaned were.

From that time since wandered have we still
In the wide world, urg'd by our forced will;
Nor ever have we happy fortune tried;
Then why should hope with our rent state abide?"

"Out of our proof we speak."—This sorry matter-of-fact retrospect of the evils of a college life is very different from the hypothetical aspirations after its incommunicable blessings expressed by a living writer of true genius and a lover of true learning, who does not seem to have been cured of the old-fashioned prejudice in favour of classic lore, two hundred years after its vanity and vexation of spirit had been denounced in 'The Return from Parnassus:'—

"I was not trained in academic bowers;
And to those learned streams I nothing owe,
Which copious from those fair twin founts do flow:
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap.
My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap;
And I walk gowned; feel unusual powers.
Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech;
Old Ramus' ghost is busy at my brain,
And my skull teems with notions infinite:
Be still, ye reeds of Camus, while I teach
Truths which transcend the searching schoolmen's vein;
And half had stagger'd that stout Stagyrite."*

Thus it is that our treasure always lies where our knowledge does not, and fortunately enough perhaps; for the empire of imagination is wider and more prolific than that of experience.

The author of the old play, whoever he was, appears to have belonged to that class of mortals, who, as Fielding has it, feed upon their own hearts: who are egotists the wrong way, made desperate by too quick a sense of constant infelicity; and have the same intense uneasy consciousness of their own defects that most men have self-complacency in their supposed advantages. Thus venting the driblets of his spleen still upon himself, he prompts the Page to say, "A mere scholar is a creature that can strike fire in the morning at his tinder-box, put on a pair of lined

* 'Sonnet to Cambridge,' by Charles Lamb.

slippers, sit rheuming till dinner, and then go to his meat when the bell rings; one that hath a peculiar gift in a cough, and a license to spit: or if you will have him defined by negatives, he is one that cannot make a good leg, one that cannot eat a mess of broth cleanly, one that cannot ride a horse without spur-galling, one that cannot salute a woman and look on her directly, one that cannot ——"

If I was not afraid of being tedious, I might here give the examination of Signor Immerito, a raw ignorant clown (whose father has purchased him a living,) by Sir Roderick and the Recorder, which throws a considerable light on the state of wit and humour, as well as of ecclesiastical patronage in the reign of Elizabeth. It is to be recollected that one of the titles of this play is "A Scourge for Simony."

Rec. For as much as nature has done her part in making you a handsome likely man—in the next place some art is requisite for the perfection of nature: for the trial whereof, at the request of my worshipful friend, I will in some sort propound questions fit to be resolved by one of your profession. Say what is a person that was never at the university?

Im. A person that was never in the university, is a living creature that can eat a tythe pig.

Rec. Very well answered: but you should have added—and must be officious to his patron. Write down that answer, to shew his learning in logic.

Sir Rod. Yea, boy, write that down: very learnedly, in good faith. I pray now let me ask you one question that I remember, whether is the masculine gender or the feminine more worthy?

Im. The feminine, sir.

Sir Rod. The right answer, the right answer. In good faith, I have been of that mind always: write, boy, that, to shew he is a grammarian.

Rec. What university are you of?

Im. Of none.

Sir Rod. He tells truth: to tell truth is an excellent virtue: boy, make two heads, one for his learning, another for his virtues, and refer this to the head of his virtues, not of his learning Now, Master Recorder, if it please you, I will examine him in an author, that will sound him to the depth; a book of astronomy, otherwise called an almanack.

Rec. Very good, Sir Roderick; it were to be wished there were no other book of humanity: then there would not be such busy state-prying fellows as are now a-days. Proceed, good sir.

Sir Rod. What is the dominical letter?

Im. C, sir, and please your worship.

Sir Rod A very good answer, a very good answer, the very answer of the

book. Write down that, and refer it to his skill in philosophy. How many days hath September?

Im. Thirty days hath September. April, June, and November, February hath twenty-eight alone, and all the rest hath thirty and one.

Sir Rod. Very learnedly, in good faith: he hath also a smack in poetry. Write down that, boy, to show his learning in poetry. How many miles from Waltham to London?

Im. Twelve, sir.

Sir Rod. How many from Newmarket to Grantham?

Im. Ten, sir.

Sir Rod. Write down that answer of his, to show his learning in arithmetic.

Page. He must needs be a good arithmetician that counted [out] money so lately.

Sir Rod. When is the new moon?

Im. The last quarter, the fifth day, at two of the clock, and thirty-eight minutes, in the morning.

Sir Rod. How call you him that is weather-wise?

Rec. A good astronomer.

Sir Rod Sirrah, boy, write him down for a good astronomer. What day of the month lights the queen's day on?

Im. The 17th of November.

Sir Rod. Boy, refer this to his virtues, and write him down a good subject.

Page. Faith, he were an excellent subject for two or three good wits; he would make a fine ass for an ape to ride upon.

Sir Rod. And these shall suffice for the parts of his learning. Now it remains to try, whether you be a man of a good utterance, that is, whether you can ask for the strayed heifer with the white face, as also chide the boys in the belfry, and bid the sexton whip out the dogs: let me hear your voice.

Im. If any man or woman—

Sir Rod. That's too high.

Im. If any man or woman.

Sir Rod. That's too low.

Im. If any man or woman can tell any tidings of a horse with four feet, two ears, that did stray about the seventh hour, three minutes in the forenoon, the fifth day—

Sir Rod. Boy, write him down for a good utterance. Master Recorder, I think he hath been examined sufficiently.

Rec. Ay, Sir Roderick, 'tis so: we have tried him very thoroughly.

Page. Ay, we have taken an inventory of his good parts, and prized them accordingly.

Sir Rod. Signior Immerito, forasmuch as we have made a double trial of thee, the one of your learning, the other of your erudition; it is expedient, also, in the next place, to give you a few exhortations, considering the greatest clerks are not the wisest men: this is therefore first to exhort you to abstain

from controversies; secondly, not to gird at men of worship, such as myself, but to use yourself discreetly; thirdly, not to speak when any man or woman coughs: do so, and in so doing, I will persevere to be your worshipful friend and loving patron. Lead Immerito in to my son, and let him despatch him, and remember my tythes to be reserved, paying twelve-pence a-year.

'Gammer Gurton's Needle'* is a still older and more curious relic; and is a regular comedy in five acts, built on the circumstance of an old woman having lost her needle, which throws the whole village into confusion, till it is at last providentially found sticking in an unlucky part of Hodge's dress. This must evidently have happened at a time when the manufacturers of Sheffield and Birmingham had not reached the height of perfection which they have at present done. Suppose that there is only one sewing-needle in a parish, that the owner, a diligent, notable old dame, loses it, that a mischief-making wag sets it about that another old woman has stolen this valuable instrument of household industry, that strict search is made everywhere in-doors for it in vain, and that then the incensed parties sally forth to scold it out in the open air, till words end in blows, and the affair is referred over to the higher authorities, and we shall have an exact idea (though perhaps not so lively a one) of what passes in this authentic document between Gammer Gurton and her Gossip Dame Chat, Diccon the Bedlam (the causer of these harms), Hodge, Gammer Gurton's servant, Tyb, her maid, Cocke, her 'prentice boy, Doll, Scapethrift, Master Baillie, his master, Doctor Rat, the curate, and Gib the Cat, who may be fairly reckoned one of the *dramatis personæ*, and performs no mean part.

"Gog's crosse, Gammer" (says Cocke, the boy), "if ye will laugh, look in but at the door.
And see how Hodge lieth tumbling and tossing amidst the floor.
Raking there some fire to find among the ashes dead†
Where there is not a spark so big as a pin's head:
At last in a dark corner two sparks he thought he sees,
Which were indeed nought else but Gib our cat's two eyes.

* The name of Still has been assigned as the author of this singular production, with the date of 1566.

† That is, to light a candle to look for the lost needle.

Puff, quoth Hodge; thinking thereby to have fire without doubt;
With that Gib shut her two eyes, and so the fire was out;
And by and by them opened, even as they were before,
With that the sparks appeared, even as they had done of yore;
And even as Hodge blew the fire, as he did think,
Gib, as he felt the blast, straightway began to wink;
Till Hodge fell of swearing, as came best to his turn;
The fire was sure bewitch'd, and therefore would not burn.
At last Gib up the stairs, among old posts and pins,
And Hodge he hied him after, till broke were both his shins;
Cursing and swearing oaths, were never of his making.
That Gib would fire the house, if that she were not taken."

Diccon, the strolling beggar (or Bedlam, as he is called,) steals a piece of bacon from behind Gammer Gurton's door, and in answer to Hodge's complaint of being dreadfully pinched for hunger, asks—

"Why, Hodge, was there none at home thy dinner for to set?
Hodge. Gog's bread, Diccon, I came too late, was nothing there to get:
Gib (a foul fiend might on her light) lik'd the milk-pan so clean:
See, Diccon, 'twas not so well washed this seven year I ween.
A pestilence light on all ill luck, I had thought yet for all this,
Of a morsel of bacon behind the door, at worst I should not miss:
But when I sought a slip to cut, as I was wont to do,
Gog's souls, Diccon, Gib our cat had eat the bacon too."

Hodge's difficulty in making Diccon understand what the needle is which his dame has lost, shows his superior acquaintance with the conveniences and modes of abridging labour in more civilized life, of which the other had no idea.

"*Hodge.* Has she not gone, trowest now thou, and lost her neele?" [So it is called here.]
"*Dic.* (*says staring.*) Her eel, Hodge? Who fished of late? That was a dainty dish.
Hodge. Tush, tush, her neele, her neele, her neele, man, 'tis neither flesh nor fish:
A little thing with a hole in the end, as bright as any siller [silver],
Small, long, sharp at the point, and strait as any pillar
Dic. I know not what a devil thou mean'st, thou bring'st me more in doubt.
Hodge, (*answers with disdain*). Know'st not with what Tom tailor's man sits broching through a clout?
A neele, a neele, my Gammer's neele is gone."

The rogue Diccon threateus to show Hodge a spirit; but though Hodge runs away through pure fear before it has time to appear, he does not fail, in the true spirit of credulity, to give a faithful and alarming account of what he did not see to his mistress, concluding with a hit at the Popish clergy.

"By the mass, I saw him of late call up a great black devil.
Oh, the knave cried, ho, ho, he roared and thunder'd;
And ye had been there, I am sure, you'd murrainly ha' wonder'd.
Gam. Wast not thou afraid, Hodge, to see him in his place?
Hodge, (*lies and says*). No and he had come to me, should have laid him on his face,
Should have promised him.
Gam. But, Hodge, had he no horns to push?
Hodge. As long as your two arms. Saw ye never Friar Rush,
Painted on a cloth, with a fine long cow's tail,
And crooked cloven feet, and many a hooked nail?
For all the world (if I should judge) should reckon him his brother:
Look even what face Friar Rush had, the devil had such another."

He then adds (quite apocryphally) while he is in for it, that "the devil said plainly that Dame Chat had got the needle," which makes all the disturbance. The same play contains the well-known good old song, beginning and ending—

"Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold:
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old,
I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good;
But sure I think, that I can drink
With him that wears a hood:
Though I go bare, take ye no care;
I nothing am a-cold:
I stuff my skin so full within
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c.

I love no roast, but a nut-brown toast,
And a crab laid in the fire:
A little bread, shall do me stead,
Much bread I do not desire.
No frost or snow, no wind I trow,
Can hurt me if I wolde,
I am so wrapt, and thoroughly lapt

In jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, &c

And Tib, my wife, that as her life
Loveth well good ale to seek;
Full oft drinks she, till ye may see
The tears run down her cheek
Then doth she troll to me the bowl,
Even as a malt-worm sholde:
And saith, sweetheart, I took my part
Of this jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand go cold:
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.

Such was the wit, such was the mirth of our ancestors:—homely, but hearty; coarse perhaps, but kindly. Let no man despise it, for "Evil to him that evil thinks." To think it poor and beneath notice because it is not just like ours, is the same sort of hypercriticism that was exercised by the person who refused to read some old books, because they were "such very poor spelling." The meagreness of their literary or their bodily fare was at least relished by themselves; and this is better than a surfeit or an indigestion. It is refreshing to look out of ourselves sometimes, not to be always holding the glass to our own peerless perfections; and as there is a dead wall which always intercepts the prospect of the future from our view, (all that we can see beyond it is the heavens,) it is as well to direct our eyes now and then without scorn to the page of history, and repulsed in our attempts to penetrate the secrets of the next six thousand years, not to turn our backs on auld lang syne!

The other detached plays of nearly the same period of which I proposed to give a cursory account, are 'Green's Tu Quoque,' 'Microcosmus,' 'Lingua,' 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton,' 'The Pinner of Wakefield,' and 'The Spanish Tragedy.' Of the spurious plays attributed to Shakspeare, and to be found in some of the editions of his works, such as 'The Yorkshire Tragedy,' 'Sir John Oldcastle,' 'The Widow of Watling Street,' &c., I shall say nothing here, because I suppose the reader to be already acquainted with them, and because I have given a general account of them in another work.

'Green's Tu Quoque,' by George Cook, a contemporary of Shakspeare's, is so called from Green the actor, who played the part of Bubble in this very lively and elegant comedy, with the cant phrase of *Tu quoque* perpetually in his mouth. The double change of situation between this fellow and his master, Staines, each passing from poverty to wealth, and from wealth to poverty again, is equally well imagined and executed. A gay and gallant spirit pervades the whole of it; wit, poetry, and morality, each take their turn in it. The characters of the two sisters, Joyce and Gertrude, are very skilfully contrasted, and the manner in which they mutually betray one another into the hands of their lovers, first in the spirit of mischief, and afterwards of retaliation, is quite dramatic. "If you cannot find in your heart to tell him you love him, I'll sigh it out for you. Come, we little creatures must help one another," says the Madcap to the Madonna. As to style and matter, this play has a number of pigeon-holes full of wit and epigrams which are flying out in almost every sentence. I could give twenty pointed conceits, wrapped up in good set terms. Let one or two at the utmost suffice. A bad hand at cards is thus described. Will Rash says to Scattergood, "Thou hast a wild hand indeed; thy small cards show like a troop of rebels, and the knave of clubs is their chief leader." Bubble expresses a truism very gaily on finding himself equipped like a gallant—"How apparel makes a man respected! The very children in the street do adore me." We find here the first mention of Sir John Suckling's "melancholy hat," as a common article of wear—the same which he chose to clap on Ford's head, and the first instance of the theatrical *double entendre* which has been repeated ever since of an actor's ironically abusing himself in his feigned character.

"*Gervase.* They say Green's a good clown.
Bubble, (*played by Green, says*) Green! Green's an ass.
Scattergood. Wherefore do you say so?
Bub. Indeed, I ha' no reason; for they say he's as like me as ever he can look."

The following description of the dissipation of a fortune in the hands of a spendthrift is ingenious and beautiful:

"Know that which made him gracious in your eyes,
And gilded o'er his imperfections,
Is wasted and consumed even like ice,
Which by the vehemence of heat dissolves,
And glides to many rivers: so his wealth,
That felt a prodigal hand, hot in expense,
Melted within his gripe, and from his coffers
Ran like a violent stream to other men's."

'Microcosmus,' by Thomas Nabbes, is a dramatic mask or allegory, in which the Senses, the Soul, a Good and a Bad Genius, Conscience, &c., contend for the dominion of a man; and notwithstanding the awkwardness of the machinery, is not without poetry, elegance, and originality. Take the description of morning as a proof:

"What do I see? Blush, grey-eyed morn, and spread
Thy purple shame upon the mountain tops;
Or pale thyself with envy, since here comes
A brighter Venus than the dull-eyed star
That lights thee up."

But what are we to think of a play, of which the following is a literal list of the *dramatis personæ?*

"Nature, a fair woman, in a white robe, wrought with birds, beasts, fruits, flowers, clouds, stars, &c.; on her head a wreath of flowers interwoven with stars.

Janus, a man with two faces, signifying Providence, in a yellow robe, wrought with snakes, as he is deus anni: on his head a crown. He is Nature's husband.

Fire, a fierce-countenanced young man, in a flame-coloured robe, wrought with gleams of fire; his hair red, and on his head a crown of flames. His creature a Vulcan.

Air, a young man of a variable countenance, in a blue robe, wrought with divers coloured clouds; his hair blue; and on his head a wreath of clouds. His creature a giant or silvan.

Water, a young woman in a sea-greeen robe, wrought with waves; her hair a sea-green, and on her head a wreath of sedge bound about with waves. Her creature a syren.

Earth, a young woman of a sad countenance. in a grass-green robe, wrought with sundry fruits and flowers; her hair black, and on her head a chaplet of flowers. Her creature a pigmy.

Love, a Cupid in a flame-coloured habit; bow and quiver, a crown of flaming hearts, &c.

Physander, a perfect grown man, in a long white robe, and on his head a garland of white lilies and roses m xed. His name *ἀπο τῆς φύσεος καὶ τῦ ἀνδρος.*

Choler, a fencer; his clothes red.
Blood, a dancer, in a watchet-coloured suit.
Phlegm, a physician, an old man; his doublet white and black; trunk hose.
Melancholy, a musician; his complexion, hair, and clothes black; a lute in his hand. He is likewise an amorist.
Bellanima, a lovely woman, in a long white robe; on her head a wreath of white flowers. She signifies the soul.
Bonus Genius, an angel, in a like white robe; wings and wreath white.
Malus Genius, a devil, in a black robe; hair, wreath, and wings black.
The Five Senses—Seeing, a chambermaid; Hearing, the usher of the hall; Smelling, a huntsman or gardener; Tasting, a cook; Touching, a gentleman usher.
Sensuality, a wanton woman, richly habited, but lasciviously dressed, &c.
Temperance, a lovely woman, of a modest countenance; her garments plain, but decent, &c.
A Philosopher, An Eremite, A Ploughman, A Shepherd, } all properly habited.
Three Furies as they are commonly fancied.
Fear, the crier of the court, with a tipstaff.
Conscience, the Judge of the court.
Hope and Despair, an advocate and a lawyer.
The other three Virtues, as they are frequently expressed by painters.
The Heroes, in bright antique habits, &c.
The front of a workmanship proper to the fancy of the rest, adorned with brass figures of angels and devils, with several inscriptions; the title is an escutcheon, supported by an angel and a devil. Within the arch a continuing perspective of ruins, which is drawn still before the other scenes, whilst they are varied.

THE INSCRIPTIONS.

Hinc gloria.	Hinc pœna.
Appetitus boni.	Appetitus mali."

Antony Brewer's 'Lingua' (1607) is of the same cast. It is much longer as well as older than 'Microcosmus.' It is also an allegory celebrating the contention of the Five Senses for the crown of superiority, and the pretensions of Lingua, or the Tongue, to be admitted as a sixth sense. It is full of child's play, and old wives' tales; but is not unadorned with passages displaying strong good sense, and powers of fantastic description.

Mr. Lamb has quoted two passages from it—the admirable enumeration of the characteristics of different languages, 'The Chaldee wise, the Arabian physical,' &c.; and the striking de-

scription of the ornaments and uses of tragedy and comedy. The dialogue between Memory, Common Sense, and Phantastes, is curious and worth considering:

"*Common Sense.* Why, good father, why are you so late now-a-days?

Memory. Thus 'tis; the most customers I remember myself to have, are, as your lordship knows, scholars, and now-a-days the most of them are become critics, bringing me home such paltry things to lay up for them, that I can hardly find them again.

Phantastes. Jupiter, Jupiter, I had thought these flies had bit none but myself; do critics tickle you, i' faith?

Mem. Very familiarly; for they must know of me, forsooth, how every idle word is written in all the musty moth-eaten manuscripts, kept in all the old libraries in every city, betwixt England and Peru.

Common Sense. Indeed I have noted these times to affect antiquities more than is requisite.

Mem. I remember in the age of Assaracus and Ninus, and about the wars of Thebes, and the siege of Troy, there were few things committed to my charge, but those that were well worthy the preserving; but now every trifle must be wrapp'd up in the volume of eternity. A rich pudding-wife, or a cobbler, cannot die but I must immortalize his name with an epitaph; a dog cannot water in a nobleman's shoe, but it must be sprinkled into the chronicles; so that I never could remember my treasure more full, and never emptier of honourable and true heroical actions."

And again, Mendacio put in his claim with great success to many works of uncommon merit:

"*Appe.* Thou boy! how is this possible? Thou art but a child, and there were sects of philosophy before thou wert born.

Men. Appetitus, thou mistakest me; I tell thee, three thousand years ago was Mendacio born in Greece, nursed in Crete, and ever since honoured every where: I'll be sworn I held old Homer's pen when he writ his Iliads and his Odysseys

Appe. Thou hadst need, for I hear say he was blind.

Men. I helped Herodotus to pen some part of his Muses; lent Pliny ink to write his history; rounded Rabelais in the ear when he historified Pantagruel; as for Lucian, I was his genius. O, those two books, 'De Vera Historia,' however they go under his name, I'll be sworn I writ them every tittle.

Appe. Sure as I am hungry, thou'lt have it for lying. But hast thou rusted this latter time for want of exercise?

Men. Nothing less. I must confess I would fain have jogged Stow and great Hollingshed on their elbows, when they were about their Chronicles; and, as I remember, Sir John Mandevill's Travels, and a great part of the 'Decades," were of my doing; but for the 'Mirror of Knighthood,' 'Bevis of Southampton,' 'Palmerin of England,' 'Amadis of Gaul,' 'Huon de Bor-

deaux,' 'Sir Guy of Warwick,' 'Martin Marprelate,' 'Robin Hood,' 'Garagantua,' 'Gerilion,' and a thousand such exquisite monuments as these, no doubt but they breathe in my breath up and down."

'The Merry Devil of Edmonton,' which has been sometimes attributed to Shakspeare, is assuredly not unworthy of him. It is more likely, however, both from the style and subject matter, to have been Heywood's than any other person's. It is perhaps the first example of sentimental comedy we have—romantic, sweet, tender, it expresses the feelings of honour, love, and friendship in their utmost delicacy, enthusiasm, and purity. The names alone, Raymond Mounchersey, Frank Jerningham, Clare, Millisent, "sound silver sweet, like lovers' tongues by night." It sets out with a sort of story of Doctor Faustus, but this is dropt as jarring on the tender chords of the rest of the piece. The wit of 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton' is as genuine as the poetry. Mine Host of the George is as good a fellow as Boniface, and the deer-stealing scenes in the forest between him, Sir John the curate, Smug the smith, and Banks the miller, are "very honest knaveries," as Sir Hugh Evans has it. The air is delicate, and the deer, shot by their cross-bows, fall without a groan! Frank Jerningham says to Clare,

"The way lies right: hark, the clock strikes at Enfield: what's the hour?
Young Clare. Ten, the bell says.
Jern. It was but eight when we set out from Cheston: Sir John and his sexton are at their ale to-night, the clock runs at random.
Y. Clare. Nay, as sure as thou livest, the villanous vicar is abroad in the chase. The priest steals more venison than half the country.
Jern. Millisent, how dost thou?
Mil. Sir, very well.
I would to God we were at Brian's lodge."

A volume might be written to prove this last answer Shakspeare's, in which the tongue says one thing in one line, and the heart contradicts it in the next; but there were other writers living in the time of Shakspeare, who knew these subtle windings of the passions besides him,—though none so well as he!

'The Pinner of Wakefield, or George a Green,' is a pleasant interlude, of an early date, and the author unknown, in which kings and cobblers, outlaws and Maid Marians, are "hail-fellow

well met," and in which the features of the antique world are made smiling and amiable enough. Jenkin, George a Green's servant, is a notorious wag. Here is one of his pretended pranks:

"*Jenkin.* This fellow comes to me,
And takes me by the bosom: you slave,
Said he, hold my horse, and look
He takes no cold in his feet.
No, marry shall he, sir, quoth I.
I'll lay my cloak underneath him.
I took my cloak, spread it all along,
And his horse on the midst of it.
George. Thou clown, did'st thou set his horse upon thy cloak?
Jenk. Aye, but mark how I served him.
Madge and he was no sooner gone down into the ditch
But I plucked out my knife, cut four holes in my cloak, and made his horse stand on the bare ground."

The first part of 'Jeronymo' is an indifferent piece of work, and the second, or 'The Spanish Tragedy,' by Kyd, is like unto it, except the interpolations idly said to have been added by Ben Jonson, relating to Jeronymo's phrensy, "which have all the melancholy madness of poetry, if not the inspiration."

LECTURE VI.

On Miscellaneous Poems; F. Beaumont, P. Fletcher, Drayton, Daniel, etc.; Sir P. Sidney's 'Arcadia,' and other works.

I SHALL, in the present Lecture, attempt to give some idea of the lighter productions of the Muse in the period before us, in order to show that grace and elegance are not confined entirely to later times, and shall conclude with some remarks on Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia.'

I have already made mention of the lyrical pieces of Beaumont and Fletcher. It appears from his poems, that many of these were composed by Francis Beaumont, particularly the very beautiful ones in the tragedy of 'The False One,' the 'Praise of Love' in that of 'Valentinian,' and another in 'The Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman,' an "Address to Melancholy," which is the perfection of this kind of writing.

"Hence, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly
There's nought in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see't,
But only melancholy,
Oh, sweetest melancholy,
Welcome folded arms and fixed eyes,
A sight that piercing mortifies;
A look that's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound;
Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves:
Moon-light walks, where all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd, save bats and owls;
A midnight bell, a passing groan,
These are the sounds we feed upon:
Then stretch our bones in a still, gloomy valley;
Nothing so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy."

It has been supposed (and not without every appearance of good reason) that this pensive strain, "most musical, most melancholy," gave the first suggestion of the spirited introduction to Milton's 'Il Penseroso.'

> "Hence, vain deluding joys,
> The brood of folly without father bred!
> But hail, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
> Hail, divinest melancholy,
> Whose saintly visage is too bright
> To hit the sense of human sight," &c.

The same writer thus moralises on the life of man, in a set of similes, as apposite as they are light and elegant:

> "Like to the falling of a star,
> Or as the flights of eagles are,
> Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue,
> Or silver drops of morning dew,
> Or like a wind that chafes the flood,
> Or bubbles which on water stood:
> E'en such is man, whose borrow'd light
> Is straight call'd in and paid to-night:—
> The wind blows out, the bubble dies:
> The spring entomb'd in autumn lies;
> The dew's dried up, the star is shot,
> The flight is past, and man forgot."

"The silver foam which the wind severs from the parted wave" is not more light or sparkling than this: the dove's downy pinion is not softer and smoother than the verse. We are too ready to conceive of the poetry of that day, as altogether old-fashioned, meagre, squalid, deformed, withered and wild in its attire, or as a sort of uncouth monster, like "grim-visaged, comfortless despair," mounted on a lumbering, unmanageable Pegasus, dragon-winged and leaden-hoofed; but it as often wore a sylph-like form with Attic vest, with fairy feet, and the butterfly's gaudy wings. The bees were said to have come, and built their hive in the mouth of Plato when a child; and the fable might be transferred to the sweeter accents of Beaumont and Fletcher! Beaumont died at the age of five-and-twenty. One of these writers makes Bellario the Page say to Philaster, who threatens to take his life—

"'Tis not a life;
'Tis but a piece of childhood thrown away."

But here was youth, genius, aspiring hope, growing reputation, cut off like a flower in its summer-pride, or like "the lily on its stalk green," which makes us repine at fortune and almost at nature, that seems to set so little store by their greatest favourites. The life of poets is, or ought to be (judging of it from the light it lends to ours,) a golden dream, full of brightness and sweetness, "lapt in Elysium;" and it gives one a reluctant pang to see the splendid vision, by which they are attended in their path of glory, fade like a vapour, and their sacred heads laid low in ashes, before the sand of common mortals has run out. Fletcher too was prematurely cut off by the plague. Raphael died at four-and-thirty, and Correggio at forty. Who can help wishing that they had lived to the age of Michael Angelo and Titian? Shakspeare might have lived another half century, enjoying fame and repose, "now that his task was smoothly done," listening to the music of his name, and better still, of his own thoughts, without minding Rymer's abuse of "the tragedies of the last age." His native stream of Avon would then have flowed with softer murmurs to the ear, and his pleasant birthplace, Stratford, would in that case have worn even a more gladsome smile than it does, to the eye of fancy!—Poets, however, have a sort of privileged after-life, which does not fall to the common lot; the rich and mighty are nothing but while they are living; their power ceases with them: but "the sons of memory, the great heirs of fame," leave the best part of what was theirs, their thoughts, their verse, what they most delighted and prided themselves in, behind them—imperishable, incorruptible, immortal!—Sir John Beaumont (the brother of our dramatist), whose loyal and religious effusions are not worth much, very feelingly laments his brother's untimely death in an epitaph upon him:

"Thou shouldst have followed me, but Death (to blame)
Miscounted years, and measured age by fame;
So dearly hast thou bought thy precious lines,
Their praise grew swiftly; so thy life declines,

Thy Muse, the hearer's Queen, the readers Love,
All ears, all hearts (but Death's) could please and move"

Beaumont's verses addressed to Ben Jonson at the Mermaid are a pleasing record of their friendship, and of the way in which they "fleeted the time carelessly" as well as studiously "in the golden age" of our poetry:

[*Lines sent from the country with two unfinished Comedies, which deferred their merry meetings at the Mermaid.*]

"The sun which doth the greatest comfort bring
To absent friends, because the self-same thing
They know they see, however absent, is
Here our best hay-maker, (forgive me this,
It is our country style) in this warm shine
I lie and dream of your full Mermaid wine:
Oh, we have water mixt with claret lees,
Drink apt to bring in drier heresies
Than here, good only for the sonnet's strain,
With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain:
Think with one draught a man's invention fades,
Two cups had quite spoil'd Homer's Iliads.
'Tis liquor that will find out Sutcliffe's wit,
Like where he will, and make him write worse yet:
Fill'd with such moisture, in most grievous qualms*
Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms:
And so must I do this: and yet I think
It is a potion sent us down to drink
By special providence, keep us from fights,
Make us not laugh when we make legs to knights;
'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,
A medicine to obey our magistrates.
* * * * * * *
Methinks the little wit I had is lost
Since I saw you, for wit is like a rest
Held up at tennis, which men do the best
With the best gamesters. What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! Hard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtile flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest

* So in Rochester's epigram:—

"Sternhold and Hopkins had great qualms,
When they translated David's Psalms."

Of his dull life; then when there hath been thrown
Wit able enough to justify the town
For three days past, wit that might warrant be
For the whole city to talk foolishly,
Till that were cancell'd; and when that was gone,
We left an air behind us, which alone
Was able to make the two next companies
Right witty, though but downright fools more wise"

I shall not in this place repeat Marlowe's celebrated song 'Come live with me and be my love,' nor Sir Walter Raleigh's no less celebrated answer to it (they may both be found in Walton's 'Complete Angler,' accompanied with scenery and remarks worthy of them); but I may quote, as a specimen of the high and romantic tone in which the poets of this age thought and spoke of each other, the 'Vision upon the Conceipt of the Faëry Queen,' understood to be by Sir Walter Releigh:

"Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay,
Within that temple, where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn, and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,
Whose tomb fair Love, and fairer Virtue kept.
All suddenly I saw the Faery Queen:
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept;
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen,
For they this Queen attended, in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce,
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,
And curst th' access of that celestial thief."

A higher strain of compliment cannot well be conceived than this, which raises your idea even of that which it disparages in the comparison, and makes you feel that nothing could have torn the writer from his idolatrous enthusiasm for Petrarch and his Laura's tomb, but Spenser's magic verses and liviner 'Faëry Queen'—the one lifted above mortality, the other brought from the skies!

The name of Drummond of Hawthornden is in a manner entwined in cypher with that of Ben Jonson. He has not done himself or Jonson any credit by his account of their conversa-

tion; but his sonnets are in the highest degree elegant, harmonious, and striking. It appears to me that they are more in the manner of Petrarch than any others that we have, with a certain intenseness in the sentiment, an occasional glitter of thought, and uniform terseness of expression. The reader may judge for himself from a few examples.

"I know that all beneath the moon decays,
And what by mortals in this world is wrought
In time's great periods shall return to nought;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know that all the Muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of spright which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few or none are sought;
That there is nothing lighter than vain praise.
I know frail beauty's like the purple flow'r,
To which one morn oft birth and death affords;
That love a jarring is of mind's accords,
Where sense and will bring under reason's pow'r.
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, alas! I both must write and love."

Another—

"Fair moon, who with thy cold and silver shine
Mak'st sweet the horror of the dreadful night,
Delighting the weak eye with smiles divine,
Which Phœbus dazzles with his too much light;
Bright queen of the first Heav'n, if in thy shrine
By turning oft, and Heav'n's eternal might,
Thou hast not yet that once sweet fire of thine,
Endymion, forgot, and lovers' plight:
If cause like thine may pity breed in thee,
And pity somewhat else to it obtain,
Since thou hast power of dreams as well as he
That holds the golden rod and mortal chain;
Now while she sleeps,* in doleful guise her show
These tears, and the black map of all my woe."

This is the eleventh sonnet: the twelfth is full of [illegible] and forced conceits, without any sentiment at all; such as calling the sun "the goldsmith of the stars," "the enameller of the moon," and "the Apelles of the flowers." This is as bad as

* His mistress.

Cowley or Sir Philip Sidney. Here is one that is worth a million of such quaint devices:

"*To the Nightingale.*

Dear chorister, who from these shadows sends*,
Ere that the blushing morn dare show her light,
Such sad lamenting strains, that night attends
(Become all ear†) stars stay to hear thy plight.
If one whose grief even reach of thought transcends,
Who ne'er (not in a dream) did taste delight,
May thee importune who like case pretends,
And seem'st to joy in woe, in woe's despite:
Tell me (so may thou milder fortune try,
And long, long sing!) for what thou thus complains,*
Since winter's gone, and sun in dappled sky
Enamour'd smiles on woods and flow'ry plains?
The bird, as if my questions did her move,
With trembling wings sigh'd forth, 'I love, I love.'"

Or if a mixture of the Della Cruscan style be allowed to enshrine the true spirit of love and poetry, we have it in the following address to the river Forth, on which his mistress had embarked:

"Slide soft, fair Forth, and make a crystal plain,
Cut your white locks, and on your foamy face
Let not a wrinkle be, when you embrace
The boat that earth's perfection doth contain.
Winds wonder, and through wondering hold your peace,
Or if that you your hearts cannot restrain
From sending sighs, feeling a lover's case,
Sigh, and in her fair hair yourselves enchain.
Or take these sighs, which absence makes arise
From my oppressed breast, and fill the sails.
Or some sweet breath new brought from Paradise.
The floods do smile, love o'er the winds prevails,
And yet huge waves arise; the cause is this,
The ocean strives with Forth the boat to kiss."

This to the English reader will express the very soul of Petrarch, the molten breath of sentiment converted into the glassy essence of a set of glittering but still graceful conceits.

"The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets," and the critic

* Scotch for send'st; for complain'st, &c.
† "I was all ear;" see Milton's 'Comus.'

that tastes poetry "ruin meets." His feet are clogged with its honey, and his eyes blinded with its beauties; and he forgets his proper vocation, which is to buzz and sting. I am afraid of losing my way in Drummond's "sugar'd sonnetting:" and have determined more than once to break off abruptly; but another and another tempts the rash hand and curious eye, which I am loth not to give, and I give it accordingly: for if I did not write these Lectures to please myself, I am at least sure I should please nobody else. In fact, I conceive that what I have undertaken to do in this and former cases, is merely to read over a set of authors with the audience, as I would do with a friend, to point out a favourite passage, to explain an objection; or if a remark or a theory occurs, to state it in illustration of the subject, but neither to tire him nor puzzle myself with pedantic rules and pragmatical formulas of criticism that can do no good to anybody. I do not come to the task with a pair of compasses or a ruler in my pocket, to see whether a poem is round or square, or to measure its mechanical dimensions, like a metre and alnager of poetry: it is not in my bond to look after exciseable articles or contraband wares, or to exact severe penalties and forfeitures for trifling oversights, or to give formal notice of violent breaches of the three unities, of geography and chronology; or to distribute printed stamps and poetical licences (with blanks to be filled up) on Mount Parnassus. I do not come armed from top to toe with colons and semi-colons, with glossaries and indexes, to adjust the spelling or reform the metre, or to prove by everlasting contradiction and querulous impatience, that former commentators did not know the meaning of their author, any more than I do, who am angry at them, only because I am out of humour with myself —as if the genius of poetry lay buried under the rubbish of the press; and the critic was the dwarf-enchanter who was to release its airy form from being stuck through with blundering points and misplaced commas; or to prevent its vital powers from being worm-eaten and consumed, letter by letter, in musty manuscripts and black-letter print. I do not think that is the way to learn "the gentle craft" of poesy, or to teach it to others:—to imbibe or to communicate its spirit; which, if it does not disentangle itself and soar above the obscure and trivial re-

searches of antiquarianism, is no longer itself, "a phœnix gazed by all." At least, so it appeared to me; it is for others to judge whether I was right or wrong. In a word, I have endeavoured to feel what was good, and to "give a reason for the faith that was in me," when necessary, and when in my power. This is what I have done, and what I must continue to do.

To return to Drummond.—I cannot but think that his sonnets come as near as almost any others to the perfection of this kind of writing, which should embody a sentiment, and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place and humour, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary impression, and should, when lengthened out into a series, form a history of the wayward moods of the poet's mind, the turns of his fate; and imprint the smile or frown of his mistress in indelible characters on the scattered leaves. I will give the two following, and have done with this author:

"In vain I haunt the cold and silver springs,
To quench the fever burning in my veins:
In vain (love's pilgrim) mountains, dales, and plains
I over-run; vain help long absence brings.
In vain, my friends, your counsel me constrains
To fly, and place my thoughts on other things.
Ah, like the bird that fired hath her wings,
The more I move the greater are my pains.
Desire, alas! desire a Zeuxis new,
From th' orient borrowing gold, from western skies
Heavenly cinnabar, sets before my eyes
In every place her hair, sweet look and hue;
That fly, run, rest I, all doth prove but vain;
My life lies in those eyes which have me slain."

The other is a direct imitation of Petrarch's description of the bower where he first saw Laura:

"Alexis, here she stay'd among these pines,
Sweet hermitress, she did alone repair:
Here did she spread the treasure of her hair,
More rich than that brought from the Colchian mires;
Here sat she by these musked eglantines;
The happy flowers seem yet the print to bear:
Her voice did sweeten here thy sugar'd lines,
To which winds, trees, beasts, birds, did lend an ear.
She here me first perceiv'd, and here a morn
Of bright carnations did o'erspread her face:

Here did she sigh, here first my hopes were born,
Here first I got a pledge of promised grace;
But ah! what serves to have been made happy so,
Sith past pleasures double but new woe!"

I should, on the whole, prefer Drummond's sonnets to Spenser's; and they leave Sydney's, picking their way through verbal intricacies and "thorny queaches,"* at an immeasurable distance behind. Drummond's other poems have great though not equal merit; and he may be fairly set down as one of our old English classics.

Ben Jonson's detached poetry I like much, as indeed I do all about him, except when he degraded himself by "the laborious foolery" of some of his farcical characters, which he could not deal with sportively, and only made stupid and pedantic. I have been blamed for what I have said, more than once, in disparagement of Ben Jonson's comic humour; but I think he was himself aware of his infirmity, and has (not improbably) alluded to it in the following speech of Crites in 'Cynthia's Revels:'

"Oh, how despised and base a thing is man,
If he not strive to erect his groveling thoughts
Above the strain of flesh! But how more cheap,
When even his best and understanding part
(The crown and strength of all his faculties)
Floats like a dead-drown'd body, on the stream
Of vulgar humour, mix'd with common'st dregs:
I suffer for their guilt now; and my soul
(Like one that looks on ill-affected eyes)
Is hurt with mere intention on their follies.
Why will I view them then? my sense might ask me:
Or is't a rarity or some new object
That strains my strict observance to this point:
But such is the perverseness of our nature,
That if we once but fancy levity,
(How antic and ridiculous soever
It suit with us) yet will our muffled thought
Chuse rather not to see it than avoid it," &c.

Ben Jonson had self-knowledge and self-reflection enough to apply this to himself. His tenaciousness on the score of critical

* Chapman's Hymn to Pan.

objections does not prove that he was not conscious of them himself, but the contrary. The greatest egotists are those whom it is impossible to offend, because they are wholly and incurably blind to their own defects; or if they could be made to see them, would instantly convert them into so many beauty-spots and ornamental graces. Ben Jonson's fugitive and lighter pieces are not devoid of the characteristic merits of that class of composition; but still often in the happiest of them, there is a specific gravity in the author's pen, that sinks him to the bottom of his subject, though buoyed up for a time with art and painted plumes, and produces a strange mixture of the mechanical and fanciful, of poetry and prose, in his songs and odes. For instance, one of his most airy effusions is the 'Triumph of his Mistress:' yet there are some lines in it that seem inserted almost by way of burlesque. It is, however, well worth repeating.

"See the chariot at hand here of love
Wherin my lady rideth!
Each that draws it is a swan or a dove;
And well the car love guideth!
As she goes all hearts do duty
Unto her beauty:
And enamour'd, do wish so they might
But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.
Do but look on her eyes, they do light
All that love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
As love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark, her forehead's smoother
Than words that soothe her:
And from her arch'd brows, such a grace
Sheds itself through the face,
As alone there triumphs to the life
All the gain, all the good of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily glow,
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Ha' you mark'd but the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Ha' you felt *the wool of beaver?*
Or swan's down ever?

Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?
Or *the nard in the fire?*
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
Oh, so white! Oh, so soft! Oh, so sweet is she!"

His 'Discourse with Cupid,' which follows, is infinitely delicate and *piquant*, and without one single blemish. It is a perfect "nest of spicery."

"Noblest Charis, you that are
Both my fortune and my star!
And do govern more my blood,
Than the various moon the flood!
Hear, what late discourse of you,
Love and I have had; and true.
'Mongst my Muses finding me,
Where he chanc'd your name to see
Set, and to this softer strain;
'Sure,' said he, 'If I have brain,
This here sung can be no other,
By description, but my mother!
So hath Homer prais'd her hair;
So Anacreon drawn the air
Of her face, and made to rise,
Just about her sparkling eyes,
Both her brows bent like my bow.
By her looks I do her know,
Which you call my shafts. And see!
Such my mother's blushes be,
As the bath your verse discloses
In her cheeks, of milk and roses;
Such as oft I wanton in.
And, above her even chin,
Have you plac'd the bank of kisses,
Where you say, men gather blisses,
Ripen'd with a breath more sweet,
Than when flowers and west-winds meet,
Nay, her white and polish'd neck,
With the lace that doth it deck,
Is my mother's! hearts of slain
Lovers, made into a chain!
And between each rising breast
Lies the valley, call'd my nest,
Where I sit and proyne my wings
After flight; and put new stings
To my shafts! Her very name

With my mother's is the same.'—
'I confess all,' I replied,
'And the glass hangs by her side,
And the girdle 'bout her waist,
All is Venus: save unchaste.
But, alas! thou seest the least
Of her good, who is the best
Of her sex; but could'st thou, Love,
Call to mind the forms that strove
For the apple, and those three
Make in one, the same were she.
For this beauty yet doth hide
Something more than thou hast spied.
Outward grace weak love beguiles:
She is Venus when she smiles,
But she's Juno when she walks,
And Minerva when she talks.'"

In one of the songs in 'Cynthia's Revels,' we find, amidst some very pleasing imagery, the origin of a celebrated line in modern poetry—

"Drip, drip, drip, drip, drip," &c.

This has not even the merit of originality, which is hard upon it. Ben Jonson had said two hundred years before,

"Oh, I could still
(Like melting snow upon some craggy hill)
Drop, drop, drop, drop,
Since nature's pride is now a wither'd daffodil."

His 'Ode to the Memory of Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morrison' has been much admired, but I cannot but think it one of his most fantastical and perverse performances.

I cannot, for instance, reconcile myself to such stanzas as these:

"Of which we priests and poets say
Such truths as we expect for happy men,
And there he lives with memory; and Ben

The Stand.

Jonson, who sung this of him, ere he went
Himself to rest,

Or taste a part of that full joy he meant
To have exprest,
In this bright asterism;
Where it were friendship's schism
(Were not his Lucius long with us to tarry)
To separate these twi-
Lights, the Dioscori;
And keep the one half from his Harry.
But fate doth so alternate the design,
While that in Heaven, this light on earth doth shine."

This seems as if because he cannot without difficulty write smoothly, he becomes rough and crabbed in a spirit of defiance, like those persons who cannot behave well in company, and affect rudeness to show their contempt for the opinions of others.

His 'Epistles' are particularly good, equally full of strong sense and sound feeling. They show that he was not without friends, whom he esteemed, and by whom he was deservedly esteemed in return. The controversy started about his character is an idle one, carried on in the mere spirit of contradiction, as if he were either made up entirely of gall, or dipped in "the milk of human kindness." There is no necessity or ground to suppose either. He was no doubt a sturdy, plain-spoken, honest, well-disposed man, inclining more to the severe than the amiable side of things; but his good qualities, learning, talents, and convivial habits preponderated over his defects of temper or manners; and in a course of friendship some difference of character, even a little roughness or acidity, may relish to the palate; and olives may be served up with effect as well as sweetmeats. Ben Jonson, even by his quarrels and jealousies, does not seem to have been curst with the last and damning disqualification for friendship,—heartless indifference. He was also what is understood by a *good fellow*, fond of good cheer and good company: and the first step for others to enjoy your society, is for you to enjoy theirs. If any one can do without the world, it is certain that the world can do quite as well without him. His 'Verses Inviting a Friend to Supper' give us as familiar an idea of his private habits and character, as his 'Epistle to Michael Drayton,' that to Selden, &c.; his 'Lines to the Memory of Shakspeare,'

and his noble prose 'Eulogy on Lord Bacon,' in his disgrace. do a favourable one.

Among the best of these (perhaps the very best) is the 'Address to Sir Robert Wroth,' which, besides its manly moral sentiments, conveys a strikingly picturesque description of rural sports and manners at this interesting period:

"How blest art thou, canst love the country, Wroth,
Whether by choice, or fate, or both!
And though so near the city and the court,
Art ta'en with neither's vice nor sport:
That at great times, art no ambitious guest
Of sheriff's dinner, or of mayor's feast;
Nor com'st to view the better cloth of state,
The richer hangings, or the crown-plate;
Nor throng'st (when masquing is) to have a sight
Of the short bravery of the night;
To view the jewels, stuffs, the pains, the wit
There wasted, some not paid for yet!
But canst at home, in thy securer rest,
Live with unbought provision blest;
Free from proud porches or their gilded roofs,
'Mongst lowing heards and solid hoofs:
Along the curled woods and painted meads,
Through which a serpent river leads
To some cool courteous shade, which he calls his,
And makes sleep softer than it is!
Or if thou list the night in watch to break,
A-bed canst hear the loud stag speak,
In spring oft roused for their master's sport,
Who for it makes thy house his court;
Or with thy friends, the heart of all the year,
Divid'st upon the lesser deer;
In autumn, at the partrich mak'st a flight,
And giv'st thy gladder guests the sight;
And in the winter hunt'st the flying hare,
More for thy exercise than fare;
While all that follows, their glad ears apply
To the full greatness of the cry:
Or hawking at the river or the bush,
Or shooting at the greedy thrush,
Thou dost with some delight the day out-wear,
Although the coldest of the year!
The whilst the several seasons thou hast seen
Of flow'ry fields, of copses green,

The mowed meadows, with the fleeced sheep,
And feasts that either shearers keep;
The ripened ears yet humble in their height,
And furrows laden with their weight;
The apple-harvest that doth longer last;
The hogs return'd home fat from mast;
The trees cut out in log; and those boughs made
A fire now, that lent a shade!
Thus Pan and Sylvan having had their rites,
Comus puts in for new delights;
And fills thy open hall with mirth and cheer,
As if in Saturn's reign it were;
Apollo's harp and Hermes' lyre resound,
Nor are the Muses strangers found:
The rout of rural folk come thronging in
(Their rudeness then is thought no sin),
Thy noblest spouse affords them welcome grace:
And the great heroes of her race
Sit mixt with loss of state or reverence.
Freedom doth with degree dispense.
The jolly wassall walks the often round,
And in their cups their cares are drown'd:
They think not then which side the cause shall leese,
Nor how to get the lawyer fees.
Such, and no other, was that age of old,
Which boasts t' have had the head of gold.
And such since thou canst make thine own content,
Strive, Wroth, to live long innocent.
Let others watch in guilty arms, and stand
The fury of a rash command,
Go enter breaches, meet the cannon's rage,
That they may sleep with scars in age,
And show their feathers shot and colours torn,
And brag that they were therefore born.
Let this man sweat, and wrangle at the bar
For every price in every jar,
And change possessions oftener with his breath,
Than either money, war, or death:
Let him, than hardest sires, more disinherit,
And eachwhere boast it as his merit,
To blow up orphans, widows, and their states,
And think his power doth equal Fate's.
Let that go heap a mass of wretched wealth,
Purchas'd by rapine, worse than stealth;
And brooding o'er it sit, with broadest eyes
Not doing good, scarce when he dies.

Let thousands more go flatter vice, and win,
By being organs to great sin;
Get place and honour, and be glad to keep
The secrets that shall break their sleep:
And, so they ride in purple, eat in plate,
Though poison, think it a great fate.
But thou, my Wroth, if I can truth apply,
Shalt neither that nor this envy:
Thy peace is made; and, when man's state is well,
'Tis better, if he there can dwell.
God wisheth none should wrack on a strange shelf;
To him man's dearer than t' himself.
And howsoever, we may think things sweet,
He always gives what he knows meet;
Which who can use is happy: such be thou.
Thy morning's and thy evening's vow
Be thanks to him, and earnest prayer, to find
A body sound, with sounder mind;
To do thy country service, thyself right;
That neither want do thee affright,
Nor death; but when thy latest sand is spent,
Thou mayst think life a thing but lent."

Of all the poetical Epistles of this period, however, that of Daniel to the Countess of Cumberland, for weight of thought and depth of feeling, bears the palm. The reader will not peruse this effusion with less interest or pleasure, from knowing that it is a favourite with Mr. Wordsworth:

"He that of such a height hath built his mind,
And rear'd the dwelling of his thoughts so strong,
As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame
Of his resolved powers; nor all the wind
Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong
His settled peace, or to disturb the same:
What a fair seat hath he, from whence he may
The boundless wastes and wilds of man survey!
And with how free an eye doth he look down
Upon these lower regions of turmoil,
Where all the storms of passions mainly beat
On flesh and blood; where honour, pow'r, renown,
Are only gay afflictions, golden toil;
Where greatness stands upon as feeble feet
As frailty doth; and only great doth seem
To little minds, who do it so esteem.

He looks upon the mightiest monarch's wars
But only as on stately robberies;
Where evermore the fortune that prevails
Must be the right: the ill-succeeding mars
The fairest and the best fac'd enterprize.
Great pirate Pompey lesser pirates quails:
Justice, he sees (as if seduced) still
Conspires with pow'r, whose cause must not be ill.
He sees the face of right t' appear as manifold
As are the passions of uncertain man;
Who puts it in all colours, all attires,
To serve his ends, and make his courses hold.
He sees, that let deceit work what it can,
Plot and contrive base ways to high desires;
That the all-guiding Providence doth yet
All disappoint, and mocks this smoke of wit.
Nor is he mov'd with all the thunder-cracks
Of tyrants' threats, or with the surly brow
Of pow'r, that proudly sits on others' crimes,
Charg'd with more crying sins than those he checks.
The storms of sad confusion, that may grow
Up in the present for the coming times,
Appal not him; that hath no side at all,
But of himself, and knows the worst can fall.
Although his heart (so near allied to earth)
Cannot but pity the perplexed state
Of troublous and distress'd mortality,
That thus make way unto the ugly birth
Of their own sorrows, and do still beget
Affliction upon imbecility:
Yet seeing thus the course of things must run,
He looks thereon not strange, but as fore-done.
And whilst distraught ambition compasses,
And is encompass'd; whilst as craft deceives,
And is deceiv'd; whilst man doth ransack man,
And builds on blood, and rises by distress;
And th' inheritance of desolation leaves
To great expecting hopes; he looks thereon,
As from the shore of peace, with unwet eye,
And bears no venture in impiety."

Michael Drayton's 'Poly-Olbion' is a work of great length and of unabated freshness and vigour in itself, though the monotony of the subject tires the reader. He describes each place with the accuracy of a topographer, and the enthusiasm of a

poet, as if his muse were the very *genius loci*. His 'Heroical Epistles' are also excellent. He has a few lighter pieces, but none of exquisite beauty or grace. His mind is a rich marly soil that produces an abundant harvest, and repays the husbandman's toil; but few flaunting flowers, the garden's pride, grow in it, nor any poisonous weeds.

P. Fletcher's 'Purple Island' is nothing but a long enigma, describing the body of a man, with the heart and veins, and the blood circulating in them, under the fantastic designation of 'The Purple Island.'

The other poets whom I shall mention, and who properly belong to the age immediately following, were William Browne, Carew, Crashaw, Herrick, and Marvell. Browne was a pastoral poet, with much natural tenderness and sweetness, and a good deal of allegorical quaintness and prolixity. Carew was an elegant court-trifler. Herrick was an amorist, with perhaps more fancy than feeling, though he has been called by some the English Anacreon. Crashaw was a hectic enthusiast in religion and in poetry, and erroneous in both. Marvell deserves to be remembered as a true poet as well as patriot, not in the best of times. I will, however, give short specimens from each of these writers, that the reader may judge for himself, and be led by his own curiosity, rather than my recommendation, to consult the originals. Here is one by T. Carew:

"Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose:
For in your beauties, orient deep
These flow'rs, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more, whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day;
For in pure love, Heaven did prepare
Those powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more, whither doth haste
The nightingale, when May is past;
For in your sweet dividing throat
She winters, and keeps warm her note

Ask me no more, where those stars light,
That downwards fall in dead of night;

For in your eyes they sit, and there
Fixed become, as in their sphere.

Ask me no more, if east or west
The phœnix builds her spicy nest;
For unto you at last she flies,
And in your fragrant bosom dies."

'The Hue and Cry of Love,' 'The Epitaphs on Lady Mary Villiers,' and 'The Friendly Reproof to Ben Jonson for his Angry Farewell to the Stage,' are in the author's best manner. We may perceive, however, a frequent mixture of the superficial and common-place, with far-fetched and improbable conceits.

Herrick is a writer who does not answer the expectations I had formed of him. He is in a manner a modern discovery, and so far has the freshness of antiquity about him. He is not trite and thread-bare. But neither is he likely to become so. He is a writer of epigrams, not of lyrics. He has point and ingenuity, but I think little of the spirit of love or wine. From his frequent allusion to pearls and rubies, one might take him for a lapidary instead of a poet. One of his pieces is entitled

"*The Rock of Rubies and the Quarry of Pearls.*

Some ask'd me where the rubies grew;
And nothing I did say;
But with my finger pointed to
The lips of Julia.

Some ask'd how pearls did grow, and where;
Then spoke I to my girl
To part her lips, and show them there
The quarrelets of pearl."

Now this is making a petrifaction both of love and poetry.

His poems, from their number and size, are "like the moats that play in the sun's beams;" that glitter to the eye of fancy, but leave no distinct impression on the memory. The two best are a translation of Anacreon, and a successful and spirited imitation of him.

"*The Wounded Cupid.*

Cupid, as he lay among
Roses, by a bee was stung.
Whereupon, in anger flying
To his mother, said thus, crying,
Help, oh help, your boy's a-dying!
And why, my pretty lad? said she.
Then, blubbering, replied he,
A winged snake has bitten me,
Which country-people call a bee.
At which she smiled; then with her hairs
And kisses drying up his tears,
Alas, said she, my wag! if this
Such a pernicious torment is;
Come, tell me then, how great 's the smart
Of those thou woundest with thy dart?"

'The Captive Bee, or the Little Filcher,' is his own:

"As Julia once a slumbering lay,
It chanced a bee did fly that way,
After a dew, or dew-like show'r,
To tipple freely in a flow'r.
For some rich flow'r he took the lip
Of Julia, and began to sip:
But when he felt he suck'd from thence
Honey, and in the quintessence,
He drank so much he scarce could stir;
So Julia took the pilferer.
And thus surpris'd, as filchers use,
He thus began himself to excuse:
Sweet lady-flow'r! I never brought
Hither the least one thieving thought;
But taking those rare lips of your's
For some fresh, fragrant, luscious flow'rs,
I thought I might there take a taste,
Where so much syrup run at waste;
Besides, know this, I never sting
The flow'r that gives me nourishing;
But with a kiss of thanks do pay
For honey that I bear away.
This said, he laid his little scrip
Of honey 'fore her ladyship;
And told her, as some tears did fall,
That that he took, and that was all.
At which she smil'd, and bid him go.

And take his bag, but thus much know,
When next he came a pilfering so,
He should from her full lips derive
Honey enough to fill his hive."

Of Marvell I have spoken with such praise as appears to me his due, on another occasion; but the public are deaf, except to proof or to their own prejudices, and I will therefore give an example of the sweetness and power of his verse.

"*To his Coy Mistress.*

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Should'st rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood;
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow.
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast;
But thirty thousand to the rest.
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state;
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor in thy marble vault shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity;
And your quaint honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now, therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin, like morning dew,

And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd pow'r.
Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness up into one ball;
And tear our pleasures with rough strife,
Through the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run."

In Browne's 'Pastorals,' notwithstanding the weakness and prolixity of his general plan, there are repeated examples of single lines and passages of extreme beauty and delicacy, both of sentiment and description, such as the following Picture of Night:

"Clamour grew dumb, unheard was shepherd's song,
And silence girt the woods: no warbling tongue
Talk'd to the echo; satyrs broke their dance,
And all the upper world lay in a trance,
Only the curled streams soft chidings kept;
And little gales that from the green leaf swept
Dry summer's dust, in fearful whisperings stirr'd,
As loth to waken any singing bird."

Poetical beauties of this sort are scattered, not sparingly, over the green lap of nature through almost every page of our author's writings. His description of the squirrel hunted by mischievous boys, of the flowers stuck in the windows like the hues of the rainbow, and innumerable others, might be quoted.

His 'Philarete' (the fourth song of the 'Shepherd's Pipe') has been said to be the origin of 'Lycidas;' but there is no resemblance, except that both are pastoral elegies for the loss of a friend. 'The Inner Temple Mask' has also been made the foundation of 'Comus,' with as little reason. But so it is: if an author is once detected in borrowing, he will be suspected of plagiarism ever after; and every writer that finds an ingenious or partial editor, will be made to set up his claim to originality against him. A more serious charge of this kind has been urged

against the principal character in 'Paradise Lost' (that of Satan), which is said to have been taken from Marino, an Italian poet. Of this we may be able to form some judgment, by a comparison with Crashaw's translation of Marino's 'Sospetto d'Herode.' The description of Satan alluded to is given in the following stanzas :—

> " Below the bottom of the great abyss,
> There where one centre reconciles all things,
> The world's profound heart pants; there placed is
> Mischief's old master; close about him clings
> A curl'd knot of embracing snakes, that kiss
> His correspondent cheeks; these loathsome strings
> Hold the perverse prince in eternal ties
> Fast bound, since first he forfeited the skies.
>
> The judge of torments, and the king of tears,
> He fills a burnish'd throne of quenchless fire;
> And for his own fair robes of light, he wears
> A gloomy mantle of dark flames; the tire
> That crowns his hated head, on high appears;
> Where seven tall horns (his empire's pride) aspire;
> And, to make up hell's majesty, each horn
> Seven crested hydras horribly adorn.
>
> His eyes, the sullen dens of death and night,
> Startle the dull air with a dismal red;
> Such his fell glances as the fatal light
> Of staring comets, that look kingdoms dead.
> From his black nostrils and blue lips, in spite
> Of hell's own stink, a worser stench is spread.
> His breath hell's lightning is; and each deep groan
> Disdains to think that heaven thunders alone.
>
> His flaming eyes' dire exhalation
> Unto a dreadful pile gives fiery breath;
> Whose unconsum'd consumption preys upon
> The never-dying life of a long death.
> In this sad house of slow destruction
> (His shop of flames) he fries himself beneath
> A mass of woes; his teeth for torment gnash,
> While his steel sides sound with his tail's strong lash."

This portrait of monkish superstition does not equal the grandeur of Milton's description :

—— "His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd and the excess
Of glory obscured."

Milton has got rid of the horns and tail, the vulgar and physical insignia of the devil, and clothed him with other greater and intellectual terrors, reconciling beauty and sublimity, and converting the grotesque and deformed into the ideal and classical. Certainly, Milton's mind rose superior to all others in this respect, on the outstretched wings of philosophic contemplation, in not confounding the depravity of the will with physical distortion, or supposing that the distinctions of good and evil were only to be subjected to the gross ordeal of the senses. In the subsequent stanzas, we however find the traces of some of Milton's boldest imagery, though its effect be injured by the incongruous mixture above stated.

"Struck with these great concurrences of things,*
Symptoms so deadly unto death and him:
Fain would he have forgot what fatal strings
Eternally bind each rebellious limb,
He shook himself, and spread his spacious wings,
Which like two bosom'd sails† embrace the dim
Air, with a dismal shade, but all in vain:
Of sturdy adamant is his strong chain.

While thus heav'n's counsels, by the low
Footsteps of their effects, he traced too well,
He tost his troubled eyes, embers that glow
Now with new rage, and wax too hot for hell.
With his foul claws he fenced his furrow'd brow,
And gave a ghastly shriek, whose horrid yell
Ran trembling through the hollow vaults of night."

The poet adds—

"The while his twisted tail he gnaw'd for spite."

There is no keeping in this. This action of meanness and mere vulgar spite, common to the most contemptible creatures,

* Alluding to the fulfilment of the prophecies and the birth of the Messiah

† "He spreads his sail-broad vans."—'Par. Lost,' b. ii., l. 927.

takes away from the terror and power just ascribed to the prince of Hell, and implied in the nature of the consequences attributed to his every movement of mind or body. Satan's soliloquy to himself is more beautiful and more in character at the same time:

> "Art thou not Lucifer? he to whom the droves
> Of stars that gild the morn in charge were given?
> The nimblest of the lightning winged loves?
> The fairest and the first-born smile of heav'n?
> Look in what pomp the mistress planet moves,
> Reverently circled by the lesser seven:
> Such and so rich the flames that from thine eyes
> Opprest the common people of the skies?
> Ah! wretch! what boots it to cast back thine eyes
> Where dawning hope no beam of comfort shows?" &c.

This is true beauty and true sublimity: it is also true pathos and morality: for it interests the mind, and affects it powerfully with the idea of glory tarnished, and happiness forfeited with the loss of virtue; but from the horns and tail of the brute-demon, imagination cannot re-ascend to the Son of the morning, nor be dejected by the transition from weal to woe, which it cannot without a violent effort picture to itself.

In our author's account of Cruelty, the chief minister of Satan, there is also a considerable approach to Milton's description of Death and Sin, the portress of hell-gates:

> "Thrice howl'd the caves of night, and thrice the sound,
> Thundering upon the banks of those black lakes,
> Rung through the hollow vaults of hell profound:
> At last her listening ears the noise o'ertakes,
> She lifts her sooty lamps and looking round,
> A general hiss,* from the whole tire of snakes
> Rebounding through hell's inmost caverns came,
> In answer to her formidable name.
>
> 'Mongst all the palaces in hell's command,
> No one so merciless as this of hers,
> The adamantine doors for ever stand
> Impenetrable, both to prayers and tears.

* See Satan's reception on his return to Pandemonium, in book x of 'Paradise Lost.'

> The walls' inexorable steel, no hand
> Of time, or teeth of hungry ruin fears."

On the whole, this poem, though Milton has undoubtedly availed himself of many ideas and passages in it, raises instead of lowering our conception of him, by showing how much more he added to it than he has taken from it.

Crashaw's translation of Strada's description of the contention between a nightingale and a musician, is elaborate and spirited, but not equal to Ford's version of the same story in his 'Lover's Melancholy.' One line may serve as a specimen of delicate quaintness, and of Crashaw's style in general :

> "And with a quaveri..g coyness tastes the strings."

Sir Philip Sidney is a writer for whom I cannot acquire a taste. As Mr. Burke said, "he could not love the French Republic"—so I may say, that I cannot love 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,' with all my good-will to it. It will not do for me, however, to imitate the summary petulance of the epigrammatist :

> "The reason why I cannot tell,
> But I don't like thee, Dr. Fell."

I must give my reasons, "on compulsion," for not speaking well of a person like Sir Philip Sidney—

> "The soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword,
> The glass of fashion, and the mould of form;"

the splendour of whose personal accomplishments, and of whose wide-spread fame, was, in his life-time,

> —— "Like a gate of steel,
> Fronting the sun, that renders back
> His figure and his heat"

a writer, too, who was universally read and enthusiastically admired for a century after his death, and who has been admired with scarce less enthusiastic, but with a more distant homage, for another century, after ceasing to be read.

We have lost the art of reading, or the privilege of writing, voluminously, since the days of Addison. Learning no longer weaves the interminable page with patient drudgery, nor ignorance pores over it with implicit faith. As authors multiply in number, books diminish in size; we cannot now, as formerly, swallow libraries whole in a single folio: solid quarto has given place to slender duodecimo, and the dingy letter-press contracts its dimensions, and retreats before the white, unsullied, faultless margin. Modern authorship is become a species of stenography: we contrive even to read by proxy. We skim the cream of prose without any trouble; we get at the quintessence of poetry without loss of time. The staple commodity, the coarse, heavy, dirty, unwieldy bullion of books, is driven out of the market of learning, and the intercourse of the literary world is carried on, and the credit of the great capitalists sustained by the flimsy circulating medium of magazines and reviews. Those who are chiefly concerned in catering for the taste of others, and serving up critical opinions in a compendious, elegant, and portable form, are not forgetful of themselves: they are not scrupulously solicitous, idly inquisitive, about the real merits, the *bona fide* contents of the works they are deputed to appraise and value, any more than the reading public who employ them. They look no farther for the contents of the work than the title-page, and pronounce a peremptory decision on its merits or defects by a glance at the name and party of the writer. This state of polite letters seems to admit of improvement in only one respect, which is to go a step farther, and write for the amusement and edification of the world, accounts of works that were never either written or read at all, and to cry up or abuse the authors by name, though they have no existence but in the critic's invention. This would save a great deal of labour in vain; anonymous critics might pounce upon the defenceless heads of fictitious candidates for fame and bread; reviews, from being novels founded upon facts, would aspire to be pure romances; and we should arrive at the *beau ideal* of a commonwealth of letters, at the euthanasia of thought, and millennium of criticism!

At the time that Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia' was written, those middle-men, the critics, were not known. The author and

reader came into immediate contact, and seemed never tired of each other's company. We are more fastidious and dissipated the effeminacy of modern taste would, I am afraid, shrink back affrighted at the formidable sight of this once popular work, which is about as long (*horresco referens!*) as all Walter Scott's novels put together; but besides its size and appearance, it has, I think, other defects of a more intrinsic and insuperable nature. It is to me one of the greatest monuments of the abuse of intellectual power upon record. It puts one in mind of the court dresses and preposterous fashions of the time, which are grown obsolete and disgusting. It is not romantic, but scholastic; not poetry, but casuistry; not nature, but art, and the worst sort of art, which thinks it can do better than nature. Of the number of fine things that are constantly passing through the author's mind, there is hardly one that he has not contrived to spoil, and to spoil purposely and maliciously, in order to aggrandize our idea of himself. Out of five hundred folio pages, there are hardly, I conceive, half a dozen sentences expressed simply and directly, with the sincere desire to convey the image implied, and without a systematic interpolation of the wit, learning, ingenuity, wisdom, and everlasting impertinence of the writer, so as to disguise the object, instead of displaying it in its true colours and real proportions. Every page is with "centric and eccentric scribbled o'er;" his muse is tattooed and tricked out like an Indian goddess. He writes a court-hand, with flourishes like a schoolmaster; his figures are wrought in chain-stitch. All his thoughts are forced and painful births, and may be said to be delivered by the Cæsarean operation. At last, they become distorted and rickety in themselves; and before they have been cramped and twisted and swaddled into lifelessness and deformity. Imagine a writer to have great natural talents, great powers of memory and invention, an eye for nature, a knowledge of the passions, much learning, and equal industry: but that he is so full of a consciousness of all this, and so determined to make the reader conscious of it at every step, that he becomes a complete intellectual coxcomb, or nearly so;—that he never lets a casual observation pass without perplexing it with an endless, running commentary, that he never states a feeling without so many

circumambages, without so many interlineations and parenthetical remarks on all that can be said for it, and anticipations of all that can be said against it, and that he never mentions a fact without giving so many circumstances, and conjuring up so many things that it is like or not like, that you lose the main clue of the story in its infinite ramifications and intersections; and we may form some faint idea of 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,' which is spun with great labour out of the author's brains, and hangs like a huge cobweb over the face of nature! This is not, as far as I can judge, an exaggerated description; but as near the truth as I can make it. The proofs are not far to seek. Take the first sentence, or open the volume anywhere and read. I will, however, take one of the most beautiful passages, near the beginning, to show how the subject matter, of which the noblest use might have been made, is disfigured by the affectation of the style, and the importunate and vain activity of the writer's mind. The passage I allude to is the celebrated description of Arcadia.

"So that the third day after, in the time that the morning did strew roses and violets in the heavenly floor against the coming of the sun, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most dainty variety recount their wrong-caused sorrow) made them put off their sleep, and rising from under a tree (which that night had been their pavilion) they went on their journey, which by-and-by welcomed Musidorus' eyes (wearied with the wasted soil of Laconia) with welcome prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees: humble valleys whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade were witnessed so to, by the cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep feeding with sober security, while the pretty lambs, with bleating oratory craved the dam's comfort; here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old: there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voice-music. As for the houses of the country (for many houses came under their eye) they were scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so far off, as that it barred mutual succour; a show, as it were, of an accompaniable solitariness, and of a civil wildness. I pray you, said Musidorus (then first unsealing his long-silent lips), what countries be these we pass through, which are so divers in show, the one wanting no store, the other having no store but of want? The country, answered Clains, where you were cast ashore, and now are passed through, is Laconia; but this country (where you now set your foot) is Arcadia."

One would think the very name might have lulled his senses to delightful repose in some still, lonely valley, and have laid the restless spirit of Gothic quaintness, witticism, and conceit in the lap of classic elegance and pastoral simplicity. Here are images, too, of touching beauty and everlasting truth that needed nothing but to be simply and nakedly expressed to have made a picture equal (nay superior) to the allegorical representation of 'The Four Seasons of Life,' by Giorgione. But no! He cannot let his imagination, or that of the reader, dwell for a moment on the beauty or power of the real object. He thinks nothing is done, unless it is his doing. He must officiously and gratuitously interpose between you and the subject, as the Cicerone of Nature, distracting the eye and the mind by continual uncalled-for interruptions, analyzing, dissecting, disjointing, murdering everything, and reading a pragmatical, self-sufficient lecture over the dead body of nature. The moving-spring of his mind is not sensibility or imagination, but dry, literal, unceasing craving after intellectual excitement, which is indifferent to pleasure or pain, to beauty or deformity, and likes to owe everything to its own perverse efforts, rather than the sense of power in other things. It constantly interferes to perplex and neutralize. It never leaves the mind in a wise passiveness. In the infancy of taste, the froward pupils of art took nature to pieces, as spoiled children do a watch, to see what was in it. After taking it to pieces they could not, with all their cunning, put it together again, so as to restore circulation to the heart, or its living hue to the face! The quaint and pedantic style here objected to was not, however, the natural growth of untutored fancy, but an artificial excrescence transferred from logic and rhetoric to poetry. It was not owing to the excess of imagination, but of the want of it, that is, to the predominance of the mere understanding or dialectic faculty over the imaginative and the sensitive. It is, in fact, poetry degenerating at every step into prose, sentiment entangling itself into a controversy, from the habitual leaven of polemics and casuistry in the writer's mind. The poet insists upon matters of fact from the beauty or grandeur that accompanies them; our prose-poet insists upon them because they are matters of fact, and buries the beauty and grandeur in a heap

of common rubbish, "like two grains of wheat in a bushel of chaff." The true poet illustrates for ornament or use: the fantastic pretender only because he is not easy till he can translate everything out of itself into something else. Imagination consists in enriching one idea by another, which has the same feeling or set of associations belonging to it in a higher or more striking degree; the quaint or scholastic style consists in comparing one thing to another by the mere process of abstraction, and the more forced and naked the comparison, the less of harmony or congruity there is in it, the more wire-drawn and ambiguous the link of generalization by which objects are brought together, the greater is the triumph of the false and fanciful style. There was a marked instance of the difference in some lines from Ben Jonson, which I have above quoted, and which, as they are alternate examples of the extremes of both in the same author, and in the same short poem, there can be nothing invidious in giving. In conveying an idea of female softness and sweetness, he asks—

> "Have you felt the wool of the beaver,
> Or swan's down ever?
> Or smelt of the bud of the briar,
> Or the nard in the fire?"

Now "the swan's down" is a striking and beautiful image of the most delicate and yielding softness; but we have no associations of a pleasing sort with the wool of the beaver. The comparison is dry, hard, and barren of effect. It may establish the matter of fact, but detracts from and impairs the sentiment. The smell of the "bud of the briar" is a double-distilled essence of sweetness: besides, there are all the other concomitant ideas of youth, beauty, and blushing modesty, which blend with and heighten the immediate feeling: but the poetical reader was not bound to know even what *nard* is (it is merely a learned substance, a nonentity to the imagination), nor whether it has a fragrant or disagreeable scent when thrown into the fire, till Ben Jonson went out of his way to give him this pedantic piece of information. It is a mere matter of fact or of experiment; and while the experiment is making in reality or fancy, the sentimem

stands still; or even taking it for granted in the literal and scientific sense, we are where we were; it does not enhance the passion to be expressed: we have no love for the smell of nard in the fire, but we have an old, a long cherished one from infancy, for the bud of the briar. Sentiment, as Mr. Burke said of nobility, is a thing of inveterate prejudice; and cannot be created, as some people (learned and unlearned) are inclined to suppose, out of fancy or out of anything by the wit of man. The artificial and natural style do not alternate in this way in the 'Arcadia:' the one is but the Helot, the eyeless drudge of the other. Thus even in the above passage, which is comparatively beautiful and simple in its general structure, we have "the bleating oratory" of lambs, as if anything could be more unlike oratory than the bleating of lambs. We have a young shepherdess knitting, whose hands keep time not to her voice, but to her "voice-music," which introduces a foreign and questionable distinction, merely to perplex the subject; we have meadows enamelled with all the sorts of "eye-pleasing flowers," as if it were necessary to inform the reader that flowers pleased the eye, or as if they did not please any other sense: we have valleys refreshed "with *silver* streams," an epithet that has nothing to do with the refreshment here spoken of: we have "an accompaniable solitariness and a civil wildness," which are a pair of very laboured antitheses; in fine, we have "want of store, and store of want."

Again, the passage describing the shipwreck of Pyrochles has been much and deservedly admired: yet it is not free from the same inherent faults.

"But a little way off they saw the mast (of the vessel) whose proud height now lay along, like a widow having lost her mate, of whom she held her honour." [This needed explanation.] "But upon the mast they saw a young man (at least if it were a man) bearing show of about eighteen years of age, who sat (as on horseback) having nothing upon him but his shirt, which being wrought with blue silk and gold, had a kind of resemblance to the sea," [this is a sort of alliteration in natural history,] "on which the sun [then near his western home] did shoot some of his beams. His hair [which the young men of Greece used to wear very long] was stirred up and down with the wind, which seemed to have a sport to play with it, as the sea had to kiss his feet; himself full of admirable beauty, set forth by the strangeness both of his seat and gesture; for, holding his head up full of unmoved majesty, he held a

sword aloft with his fair arm, which often he waved about his crown, as though he would threaten the world in that extremity."

If the original sin of alliteration, antithesis, and metaphysical conceit could be weeded out of this passage, there is hardly a more heroic one to be found in prose or poetry.

Here is one more passage marred in the making. A shepherd is supposed to say of his mistress,

"Certainly, as her eyelids are more pleasant to behold than two white kids climbing up a fair tree and browsing on its tenderest branches, and yet are nothing compared to the day-shining stars contained in them; and as her breath is more sweet than a gentle south-west wind, which comes creeping over flowery fields and shadowed waters in the extreme heat of summer; and yet is nothing compared to the honey-flowing speech that breath doth carry; no more all that our eyes can see of her [though when they have seen her, what else they shall ever see is but dry stubble after clover grass], is to be matched with the flock of unspeakable virtues laid up delightfully in that best builded fold."

Now here are images of singular beauty and of Eastern originality and daring, followed up with enigmatical or unmeaning common-places, because he never knows when to leave off, and thinks he can never be too wise or too dull for his reader. He loads his prose Pegasus like a pack-horse, with all that comes, and with a number of little trifling circumstances, that fall off, and you are obliged to stop to pick them up by the way. He cannot give his imagination a moment's pause, thinks nothing done while any thing remains to do, and exhausts nearly all that can be said upon the subject, whether good, bad, or indifferent. The above passages are taken from the beginning of the 'Arcadia,' when the author's style was hardly yet formed. The following is a less favourable, but fairer specimen of the work. It is the model of a love-letter, and is only longer than that of Adriano de Armada, in 'Love's Labour's Lost.'

"Most blessed paper, which shall kiss that hand, whereto all blessedness is in nature a servant, do not yet disdain to carry with thee the woful words of a miser now despairing: neither be afraid to appear before her, bearing the base title of the sender. For no sooner shall that divine hand touch thee, but that thy baseness shall be turned to most high preferment. Therefore mourn boldly my ink: for while she looks upon you your blackness will shine: cry

out coldly my lamentation, for while she reads you your cries will be music. Say then (O happy messenger of a most unhappy message) that the too soon born and too late dying creature, which dares not speak, no, not look, no not scarcely think (as from his miserable self unto her heavenly highness) only presumes to desire thee (in the time that her eyes and voice do exalt thee) to say, and in this manner to say, not from him, oh, no, that were not fit, but of him, thus much unto her sacred judgment. O you, the only honour to women, to men the admiration, you that being armed by love, defy him that armed you in this high estate wherein you have placed me" [*i. e.* the letter]. "yet let me remember him to whom I am bound for bringing me to your presence: and let me remember him, who (since he is yours, how mean soever he be) it is reason you have an account of him. The wretch (yet your wretch) though with languishing steps runs fast to his grave; and will you suffer a temple (how poorly built soever, but yet a temple of your deity) to be rased? But he dieth: it is most true, he dieth: and he in whom you live, to obey you, dieth. Whereof though he plain, he doth not complain: for it is a harm, but no wrong, which he hath received. He dies, because in woeful language all his senses tell him, that such is your pleasure: for if you will not that he live, alas, alas, what followeth, what followeth of the most ruined Dorus, but his end? End, then, evil destined Dorus, end; and end, thou woeful letter, end; for it sufficeth her wisdom to know, that her heavenly will shall be accomplished."—Lib. ii., p. 117.

This style relishes neither of the lover nor the poet. Nine-tenths of the work are written in this manner. It is in the very manner of those books of gallantry and chivalry, which, with the labyrinths of their style, and "the reason of their unreasonableness," turned the fine intellects of the Knight of La Mancha. In a word (and not to speak it profanely), the Arcadia is a riddle, a rebus, an acrostic in folio: it contains about 4,000 far-fetched similes, and 6,000 impracticable dilemmas; about 10,000 reasons for doing nothing at all, and as many more against it; numberless alliterations, puns, questions and commands, and other figures of rhetoric; about a score good passages that one may turn to with pleasure, and the most involved, irksome, improgressive, and heteroclite subject that ever was chosen to exercise the pen or patience of man. It no longer adorns the toilette or lies upon the pillow of Maids of Honour and Peeresses in their own right (the Pamelas and Philocleas of a later age), but remains upon the shelves of the libraries of the curious in long works and great names, a monument to show that the author was one of the ablest men and worst writers of the age of Elizabeth.

His Sonnets, inlaid in the Arcadia, are jejune, far-fetched and

frigid. I shall select only one that has been much commended. It is 'To the Highway, where his Mistress had passed,' a strange subject, but not unsuitable to the author's genius.

> "Highway, since you my chief Parnassus be,
> And that my Muse (to some ears not unsweet)
> Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet
> More oft than to a chamber melody;
> Now blessed you bear onward blessed me
> To her, where I my heart safe left shall meet;
> My Muse, and I must you of duty greet
> With thanks and wishes, wishing thankfully.
> Be you still fair, honoured by public heed,
> By no encroachment wrong'd, nor time forgot:
> Nor blamed for blood, nor shamed for sinful deed;
> And that you know, I envy you no lot
> Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss,
> Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss."

The answer of the Highway has not been preserved, but the sincerity of this appeal must no doubt have moved the stocks and stones to rise and sympathize. His 'Defence of Poesy' is his most readable performance; there he is quite at home, in a sort of special pleader's office, where his ingenuity, scholastic subtlety, and tenaciousness in argument stand him in good stead; and he brings off poetry with flying colours; for he was a man of wit, of sense, and learning, though not a poet of true taste or unsophisticated genius.

LECTURE VII.

Character of Lord Bacon s Works—compared as to style with Sir Thomas Brown and Jeremy Taylor.

Lord Bacon has been called (and justly) one of the wisest of mankind. The word *wisdom* characterizes him more than any other. It was not that he did so much himself to advance the knowledge of man or nature, as that he saw what others had done to advance it, and what was still wanting to its full accomplishment. He stood upon the high 'vantage ground of genius and learning; and traced, "as in a map the voyager his course," the long devious march of human intellect, its elevations and depressions, its windings and its errors. He had a "large discourse of reason, looking before and after." He had made an exact and extensive survey of human acquirements: he took the gauge and metre, the depths and soundings of human capacity. He was master of the comparative anatomy of the mind of man, of the balance of power among the different faculties. He had thoroughly investigated and carefully registered the steps and processes of his own thoughts, with their irregularities and failures, their liabilities to wrong conclusions, either from the difficulties of the subject, or from moral causes, from prejudice, indolence, vanity, from conscious strength or weakness; and he applied this self-knowledge on a mighty scale to the general advances or retrograde movements of the aggregate intellect of the world. He knew well what the goal and crown of moral and intellectual power was, how far men had fallen short of it, and how they came to miss it. He had an instantaneous perception of the quantity of truth or good in any given system; and of the analogy of any given result or principle to others of the same kind scattered through nature or history. His observations take in a larger range, have more profundity from the fineness

of his tact, and more comprehension from the extent of his knowledge, along the line of which his imagination ran with equal celerity and certainty, than any other person's whose writings I know. He however seized upon these results, rather by intuition than by inference: he knew them in their mixed modes and combined effects, rather than by abstraction or analysis, as he explains them to others, not by resolving them into their component parts and elementary principles, so much as by illustrations drawn from other things operating in like manner, and producing similar results; or, as he himself has finely expressed it, "by the same footsteps of nature treading or printing upon several subjects or matters." He had great sagacity of observation, solidity of judgment and scope of fancy; in this resembling Plato and Burke, that he was a popular philosopher and philosophical declaimer. His writings have the gravity of prose with the fervour and vividness of poetry. His sayings have the effect of axioms, and are at once striking and self-evident. He views objects from the greatest height, and his reflections acquire a sublimity in proportion to their profundity, as in deep wells of water we see the sparkling of the highest fixed stars. The chain of thought reaches to the centre, and ascends the brightest heaven of invention. Reason in him works like an instinct; and his slightest suggestions carry the force of conviction. His opinions are judicial. His induction of particulars is alike wonderful for learning and vivacity, for curiosity and dignity, and an all-prevading intellect binds the whole together in a graceful and pleasing form. His style is equally sharp and sweet, flowing and pithy, condensed and expansive, expressing volumes in a sentence, or amplifying a single thought into pages of rich, glowing, and delightful eloquence. He had great liberality from seeing the various aspects of things (there was nothing bigotted, or intolerant, or exclusive about him), and yet he had firmness and decision from feeling their weight and consequences. His character was then an amazing insight into the limits of human knowledge and acquaintance with the landmarks of human intellect, so as to trace its past history or point out the path to future inquirers, but when he quits the ground of contemplation of what others have done or left undone to project himself into future

discoveries, he becomes quaint and fantastic, instead of original. His strength was in reflection, not in production; he was the surveyor, not the builder of the fabric of science. He had not strictly the constructive faculty. He was the principal pioneer in the march of modern philosophy, and has completed the education and discipline of the mind for the acquisition of truth, by explaining all the impediments or furtherances that can be applied to it or cleared out of its way. In a word, he was one of the greatest men this country has to boast, and his name deserves to stand, where it is generally placed, by the side of those of our greatest writers, whether we consider the variety, the strength, or the splendour of his faculties, for ornament or use.

His 'Advancement of Learning' is his greatest work; and next to that I like the 'Essays;' for the 'Novum Organum' is more laboured and less effectual than it might be. I shall give a few instances from the first of these chiefly, to explain the scope of the above remarks.

'The Advancement of Learning' is dedicated to James I., and he there observes, with a mixture of truth and flattery, which looks very much like a bold irony—

"I am well assured that this which I shall say is no amplification at all, but a positive and measured truth: which is, that there hath not been, since Christ's time, any king or temporal monarch which hath been so learned in all literature and erudition, divine and human (as your majesty). For let a man seriously and diligently revolve and peruse the succession of the Emperors of Rome, of which Cæsar the Dictator, who lived some years before Christ, and Marcus Antoninus, were the best-learned; and so descend to the Emperors of Grecia, or of the West, and then to the lines of France, Spain, England, Scotland, and the rest, and he shall find this judgment is truly made. For it seemeth much in a king, if by the compendious extractions of other men's wits and labour, he can take hold of any superficial ornaments and shows of learning, or if he countenance and prefer learning and learned men; but to drink indeed of the true fountain of learning, nay, to have such a fountain of learning in himself, in a king, and in a king born, is almost a miracle."

To any one less wrapped up in self-sufficiency than James, the rule would have been more staggering than the exception could have been gratifying. But Bacon was a sort of prose-laureate to the reigning prince, and his loyalty had never been suspected

In recommending learned men as fit counsellors in a state, he thus points out the deficiencies of the mere empiric or man of business, in not being provided against uncommon emergencies. —"Neither," he says, "can the experience of one man's life furnish examples and precedents for the events of another man's life. For, as it happeneth sometimes, that the grand-child, or other descendant, resembleth the ancestor more than the son; so many times occurrences of present times may sort better with ancient examples, than with those of the latter or immediate times; and lastly, the wit of one man can no more countervail learning, than one man's means can hold way with a common purse."—This is finely put. It might be added, on the other hand, by way of caution, that neither can the wit or opinion of one learned man set itself up, as it sometimes does, in opposition to the common sense or experience of mankind.

When he goes on to vindicate the superiority of the scholar over the mere politician in disinterestedness and inflexibility of principle, by arguing ingeniously enough—"The corrupter sort of mere politiques, that have not their thoughts established by learning in the love and apprehension of duty, nor never look abroad into universality, do refer all things to themselves and thrust themselves into the centre of the world, as if all times should meet in them and their fortunes, never caring, in all tempests, what becomes of the ship of estates, so they may save themselves in the cock-boat of their own fortune; whereas men that feel the weight of duty, and know the limits of self-love, use to make good their places and duties, though with peril."—I can only wish that the practice were as constant as the theory is plausible, or that the time gave evidence of as much stability and sincerity of principle in well-educated minds as it does of versatility and gross egotism in self-taught men. I need not give the instances, "they will receive" (in our author's phrase) "an open allowance:" but I am afraid that neither habits of abstraction nor the want of them will entirely exempt men from a bias to their own interest; that it is neither learning nor ignorance that thrusts us into the centre of our own little world, but that it is nature that has put man there!

His character of the school-men is perhaps the finest philoso

phical sketch that was ever drawn. After observing that there are "two marks and badges of suspected and falsified science; the one, the novelty and strangeness of terms, the other the strictness of positions, which of necessity doth induce oppositions, and so questions and altercations"—he proceeds—"Surely like as many substances in nature which are solid, do putrefy and corrupt into worms; so it is the property of good and sound knowledge to putrefy and dissolve into a number of subtle, idle, unwholesome, and (as I may term them) *vermiculate* questions; which have, indeed, a kind of quickness and life of spirit, but no soundness of matter or goodness of quality. This kind of degenerate learning did chiefly reign amongst the school-men, who, having sharp and strong wits, and abundance of leisure, and small variety of reading; but their wits being shut up in the cells of a few authors (chiefly Aristotle their dictator) as their persons were shut up in the cells of monasteries and colleges, and knowing little history, either of nature or time, did out of no great quantity of matter, and infinite agitation of wit, spin out unto us those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books. For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit."

And a little further on, he adds—"Notwithstanding, certain it is, that if those school-men, to their great thirst of truth and unwearied travel of wit, had joined variety and universality of reading and contemplation, they had proved excellent lights to the great advancement of all learning and knowledge; but, as they are, they are great undertakers indeed, and fierce with dark keeping. But, as in the inquiry of the divine truth, their pride inclined to leave the oracle of God's word, and to varnish in the mixture of their own inventions; so in the inquisition of nature, they ever left the oracle of God's works, and adored the deceiving and deformed images which the unequal mirror of their own minds, or a few received authors or principles did represent unto them."

One of his acutest (I might have said profoundest) remarks relates to the near connection between deceiving and being deceived. Volumes might be written in explanation of it. "This vice, therefore," he says, "brancheth itself into two sorts; delight in deceiving, an aptness to be deceived, imposture and credulity; which, although they appear to be of a diverse nature, the one seeming to proceed of cunning, and the other of simplicity, yet certainly they do for the most part concur. For, as the verse noteth, *Percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est;* an inquisitive man is a prattler: so upon the like reason, a credulous man is a deceiver; as we see it in fame, that he that will easily believe rumours will as easily augment rumours, and add somewhat to them of his own, which Tacitus wisely noteth, when he saith *Fingunt simul creduntque*, so great an affinity hath fiction and belief."

I proceed to his account of the causes of error, and directions for the conduct of the understanding, which are admirable both for their speculative ingenuity and practical use:

"The first of these," says Lord Bacon, "is the extreme affection of two anxieties: the one antiquity, the other novelty, wherein it seemeth the children of time do take after the nature and malice of the father. For as he devoureth his children, so one of them seeketh to devour and suppress the other; while antiquity envieth there should be new additions, and novelty cannot be content to add, but it must deface. Surely, the advice of the prophet is the true direction in this respect, *State super vias antiquas, et videte quænam sit via recta et bona, et ambulate in ea.* Antiquity deserveth that reverence, that men should make a stand thereupon, and discover what is the best way, but when the discovery is well taken, then to take progression. And to speak truly," he adds, "*Antiquitas seculi juventus mundi.* These times are the ancient times when the world is ancient; and not those which we count ancient *ordine retrogrado*, by a computation backwards from ourselves.

"Another error, induced by the former, is a distrust that anything should be now to be found out which the world should have missed and passed over so long time, as if the same objection were to be made to time that Lucian makes to Jupiter and other the Heathen Gods, of which he wondereth that they begot so many children in old age, and begot none in his time, and asketh whether they were become septuagenary, or whether the law *Papia* made against old men's marriages had restrained them. So it seemeth men doubt, lest time was become past children and generation; wherein, contrary-wise, we see commonly the levity and unconstancy of men's judgments, which, till a matter be done, wonder that it can be done, and as soon as it is done wonder again that it was done no sooner, as we see in the expedition of Alexander into

Asia, which at first was prejudged as a vast and impossible enterprise, and yet afterwards it pleaseth Livy to make no more of it than this, *nil aliud quam bene ausus vana contemnere*. And the same happened to Columbus in his western navigation. But in intellectual matters it is much more common; as may be seen in most of the propositions in Euclid, which till they be demonstrate, they seem strange to our assent, but being demonstrate, our mind accepteth of them by a kind of relation (as the lawyers speak,) as if we had known them before.

"Another is an impatience of doubt and haste to assertion without due and mature suspension of judgment. For the two ways of contemplation are not unlike the two ways of action, commonly spoken of by the ancients. The one plain and smooth in the beginning, and in the end impassable; the other rough and troublesome in the entrance, but, after a while, fair and even; so it is in contemplation, if a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.

"Another error is in the manner of the tradition or delivery of knowledge, which is for the most part magistral and peremptory, and not ingenuous and faithful; in a sort, as may be soonest believed, and not easiliest examined. It is true, that in compendious treatises for practice, that form is not to be disallowed. But in the true handling of knowledge, men ought not to fall either on the one side into the vein of Velleius the Epicurean: *nil tam metuens quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videretur*; nor, on the other side, into Socrates his ironical doubting of all things, but to propound things sincerely, with more or less asseveration; as they stand in a man's own judgment, proved more or less."

Lord Bacon in this part declares, "that it is not his purpose to enter into a laudative of learning or to make a hymn to the Muses," yet he has gone near to do this in the following observations on the dignity of knowledge. He says, after speaking of rulers and conquerors:—

"But the commandment of knowledge is yet higher than the commandment over the will: for it is a commandment over the reason, belief, and understanding of man, which is the highest part of the mind, and giveth law to the will itself. For there is no power on earth which setteth a throne or chair of estate in the spirits and souls of men, and in their cogitations, imaginations, opinions, and beliefs, but knowledge and learning. And therefore we see the detestable and extreme pleasure that arch-heretics and false prophets and impostors are transported with, when they once find in themselves that they have a superiority in the faith and conscience of men; so great, as if they have once tasted of it, it is seldom seen that any torture or persecution can make them relinquish or abandon it. But as this is that which the author of the Revelations calls the depth or profoundness of Satan; so by argument of contraries, the just and lawful sovereignty over men's understanding, by force of

truth rightly interpreted, is that which approacheth nearest to the similitude of the Divine rule. . . . . Let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire, which is immortality or continuance: for to this tendeth generation, and raising of houses and families; to this tendeth buildings, foundations, and monuments; to this tendeth the desire of memory, fame, and celebration, and in effect the strength of all other humane desires; we see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power or of the hands. For, have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years and more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished? It is not possible to have the true pictures or statures of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, no, nor of the kings or great personages of much later years. For the originals cannot last: and the copies cannot but lose of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledge remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time, and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages So that, if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits, how much more are letters to be magnified, which, as ships, pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions the one of the other?"

Passages of equal force and beauty might be quoted from almost every page of this work and of the Essays.

Sir Thomas Brown and Bishop Taylor were two prose-writers in the succeeding age, who, for pomp and copiousness of style, might be compared to Lord Bacon. In all other respects they were opposed to him and to one another.—As Bacon seemed to bend all his thoughts to the practice of life, and to bring home the light of science to "the bosoms and businesses of men," Sir Thomas Brown seemed to be of opinion that the only business of life was to think, and that the proper object of speculation was, by darkening knowledge, to breed more speculation, and "find no end in wandering mazes lost." He chose the incomprehensible and impracticable as almost the only subjects fit for a lofty and lasting contemplation, or for the exercise of a solid faith. He cried out for an *oh altitudo* beyond the heights of revelation, and posed himself with apocryphal mysteries, as the pastime of his leisure hours. He pushes a question to the utmost verge of

conjecture, that he may repose on the certainty of doubt; and he removes an object to the greatest distance from him, that he may take a high and abstracted interest in it, consider it in its relation to the sum of things, not to himself, and bewilder his understanding in the universality of its nature, and the inscrutableness of its origin. His is the sublime of indifference; a passion for the abstruse and imaginary. He turns the world round for his amusement, as if it was a globe of paste-board. He looks down on sublunary affairs as if he had taken his station in one of the planets. The Antipodes are next-door neighbours to him, and Doomsday is not far off. With a thought he embraces both the poles; the march of his pen is over the great divisions of geography and chronology. Nothing touches him nearer than humanity. He feels that he is mortal only in the decay of nature, and the dust of long-forgotten tombs. The finite is lost in the infinite. The orbits of the heavenly bodies or the history of empires are to him but a point in time or a speck in the universe. The great Platonic year revolves in one of his periods. Nature is too little for the grasp of his style. He scoops an antithesis out of fabulous antiquity, and rakes up an epithet from the sweepings of Chaos. It is as if his books had dropt from the clouds, or as if Friar Bacon's head could speak. He stands on the edge of the world of sense and reason, and gains a vertigo by looking down on impossibilities and chimeras. Or he busies himself with the mysteries of the Cabala, or the enclosed secrets of the heavenly quincunxes, as children are amused with tales of the nursery. The passion of curiosity (the only passion of childhood) had in him survived to old age, and had superannuated his other faculties. He moralizes and grows pathetic on a mere idle fancy of his own, as if thought and being were the same, or as if "all this world were one glorious lie." For a thing to have ever had a name is sufficient warrant to entitle it to respectful belief, and to invest it with all the rights of a subject and its predicates. He is superstitious, but not bigoted; to him all religions are much the same, and he says that he should not like to have lived in the time of Christ and the Apostles, as it would have rendered his faith too gross and palpable. His gossiping egotism and personal char

acter have been preferred unjustly to Montaigne's. He had no personal character at all but the peculiarity of resolving all the other elements of his being into thought, and of trying experiments on his own nature in an exhausted receiver of idle and unsatisfactory speculations. All that he "differences himself by," to use his own expression, is this moral and physical indifference. In describing himself he deals only in negatives. He says he has neither prejudices nor antipathies to manners, habits, climate, food, to persons or things; they were alike acceptable to him as they afforded new topics for reflection; and he even professes that he could never bring himself heartily to hate the devil. He owns in one place of the *Religio Medici*, that "he could be content if the species were continued like trees," and yet he declares that this was from no aversion to love, or beauty, or harmony; and the reasons he assigns to prove the orthodoxy of his taste in this respect is, that he was an admirer of the music of the spheres! He tells us that he often composed a comedy in his sleep. It would be curious to know the subject or the texture of the plot. It must have been something like Nabbes's "Mask of Microcosmus,' of which the *dramatis personæ* have been already given; or else a misnomer, like Dante's 'Divine Comedy of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory.' He was twice married, as if to show his disregard even for his own theory; and he had a hand in the execution of some old women for witchcraft, I suppose to keep a decorum in absurdity, and to indulge an agreeable horror at his own fantastical reveries on the occasion. In a word, his mind seemed to converse chiefly with the intelligible forms, the spectral apparitions of things; he delighted in the preternatural and visionary, and he only existed at the circumference of his nature. He had the most intense consciousness of contradictions and non-entities, and he decks them out in the pride and pedantry of words, as if they were the attire of his proper person: the categories hang about his neck like the gold chain of knighthood, and he "walks gowned' in the intricate folds and swelling drapery of dark sayings and impenetrable riddles!

I will give one gorgeous passage to illustrate all this, from his 'Urn-Burial, or Hydriotaphia.' He digs up the urns of

some ancient Druids with the same ceremony and devotion as if they had contained the hallowed relics of his dearest friends; and certainly we feel (as it has been said) the freshness of the mould, and the breath of mortality, in the spirit and force of his style. The conclusion of this singular and unparallelled performance is as follows:

"What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture. What time the persons of these Ossuaries entered the famous nations of the dead, and slept with princes and counsellors, might admit a wide solution. But who were the proprietors of these bones, or what bodies these ashes made up, were a question above antiquarianism: not to be resolved by man, nor easily perhaps by spirits, except we consult the provincial guardians, or tutelary observators. Had they made as good provision for their names, as they have done for their reliques, they had not so grossly erred in the art of perpetuation. But to subsist in bones, and be but pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration. Vain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves a fruitless continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as emblems of mortal vanities; antidotes against pride, vain-glory, and madding vices. Pagan vain-glories, which thought the world might last for ever, had encouragement for ambition, and finding no Atropos unto the immortality of their names, were never dampt with the necessity of oblivion. Even old ambitions had the advantage of ours, in the attempts of their vain-glories, who, acting early, and before the probable meridian of time, have, by this time, found great accomplishment of their designs, whereby the ancient heroes have already outlasted their monuments and mechanical preservations. But in this latter scene of time we cannot expect such mummies unto our memories, when ambition may fear the prophecy of Elias, and Charles the Fifth can never hope to live within two Methuselahs of Hector.

"And therefore restless inquietude for the diuturnity of our memories unto present considerations, seems a vanity almost out of date, and superannuated pieces of folly. We cannot hope to live so long in our names as some have done in their persons: one face of Janus holds no proportion unto the other. 'Tis too late to be ambitious. The great mutations of the world are acted, or time may be too short for our designs. To extend our memories by monuments, whose death we daily pray for, and whose duration we cannot hope, without injury to our expectations in the advent of the last day, were a contradiction to our beliefs. We, whose generations are ordained in this setting part of time, are providentially taken off from such imaginations. And being necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity, are naturally constituted unto thoughts of the next world, and cannot excusably decline the consideration of that duration which maketh pyramids pillars of snow, and all that's past a moment.

"Circles and right lines limit and close all bodies, and the mortal right-lined circle must conclude and shut up all. There is no antidote against the opium of time, which temporarily considereth all things; our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors. Grave-stones tell truth scarce forty years: generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks. To be read by bare inscriptions like many in Gruter, to hope for eternity by enigmatical epithets, or first letters of our names, to be studied by antiquaries, who we were, and have new names given us like many of the mummies, are cold consolations unto the students of perpetuity, even by everlasting languages.

"To be content that times to come should only know there was such a man, not caring whether they knew more of him, was a frigid ambition in Cardan; disparaging his horoscopal inclination and judgment of himself, who cares to subsist like Hippocrates' patients, or Achilles' horses in Homer, under naked nominations without deserts and noble acts, which are the balsam of our memories, the Entelechia and soul of our subsistences. To be nameless in worthy deeds exceeds an infamous history. The Canaanitish woman lives more happily without a name, than Herodias with one. And who had not rather have been the good thief, than Pilate?

"But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it; time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal durations; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon, without the favour of the everlasting register. Who knows whether the best of men be known? or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

"Oblivion is not to be hired: the greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto that current arithmetic, which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt whether thus to live, were to die; since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time, that grows old itself, bids us hope no long duration: diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

"Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of affliction leave but short smart upon us.

Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities which are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which, notwithstanding, is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision in nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days, and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. A great part of antiquity contented their hopes of subsistency with a transmigration of their souls. A good way to continue their memories, while having the advantage of plural successions, they could not but act something remarkable in such a variety of beings, and enjoying the fame of their passed selves, make accumulation of glory unto their last durations. Others, rather than be lost in the uncomfortable night of nothing, were content to recede into the common being, and make one particle of the public soul of all things, which was no more than to return into their unknown and divine original again. Egyptian ingenuity was more unsatisfied, conserving their bodies in sweet consistences, to attend the return of their souls. But all was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandize, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams.

"In vain do individuals hope for immortality, or any patent from oblivion, in preservations below the moon: men have been deceived even in their flatteries above the sun, and studied conceits to perpetuate their names in heaven. The various cosmography of that part hath already varied the names of contrived constellations; Nimrod is lost in Orion, and Osiris in the Dog-star. While we look for incorruption in the heavens, we find they are but like the earth; durable in their main bodies, alterable in their parts; whereof beside comets and new stars, perspectives begin to tell tales. And the spots that wander about the sun, with Phæton's favour, would make clear conviction.

"There is nothing immortal but immortality; whatever hath no beginning may be confident of no end. All others have a dependent being, and within the reach of destruction, which is the peculiar of that necessary essence that cannot destroy itself; and the highest strain of omnipotency to be so powerfully constituted, as not to suffer even from the power of itself. But the sufficiency of Christian immortality frustrates all earthly glory, and the quality of either state after death makes a folly of posthumous memory. God, who can only destroy our souls, and hath assured our resurrection, either of our bodies or names, hath directly promised no duration. Wherein there is so much of chance, that the boldest expectants have found unhappy frustration; and to how long subsistence, seems but a scape in oblivion. But man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing Nativities and Deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery, in the infamy of his nature.

"Life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible sun within us. A small fire sufficeth for life, great flames seemed too little after death, while men vainly affected precious pyres and to burn like Sardanapalus; but the wisdom

of funeral laws found the folly of prodigal blazes, and reduced undoing fires unto the rule of sober obsequies, wherein few could be so mean as not to provide wood, pitch, a mourner, and an urn.

"Five languages secured not the epitaph of Gordianus; the man of God lives longer without a tomb than any by one, invisibly interred by angels, and adjudged to obscurity, though not without some marks directing human discovery. Enoch and Elias, without either tomb or burial, in an anomalous state of being, are the great examples of perpetuity, in their long and living memory, in strict account being still on this side death, and having a late part yet to act on this stage of earth. If in the decretory term of the world we shall not all die, but be changed, according to received translation, the last day will make but few graves; at least quick resurrections will anticipate lasting sepultures; some graves will be opened before they be quite closed, and Lazarus be no wonder. When many that feared to die shall groan that they can die but once, the dismal state is the second and living death, when life puts despair on the damned; when men shall wish the covering of mountains, not of monuments, and annihilation shall be courted.

"While some have studied monuments, others have studiously declined them; and some have been so vainly boisterous, that they durst not acknowledge their graves; wherein Alaricus seems most subtle, who had a river turned to hide his bones at the bottom. Even Sylla, that thought himself safe in his urn, could not prevent revenging tongues and stones thrown at his monument. Happy are they whom privacy makes innocent, who deal so with men in this world that they are not afraid to meet them in the next,—who, when they die, make no commotion among the dead, and are not touched with that poetical taunt of Isaiah.

"Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain-glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion, which trampleth upon pride, and sits on the neck of ambition, humbly pursuing that infallible perpetuity, unto which all others must diminish their diameters and be poorly seen in angles of contingency.

"Pious spirits, who passed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their fore-beings. And if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, ecstasies, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kiss of the spouse, gustation of God, and ingression into the divine shadow, they have already had a handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.

"To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names, and predicament of chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their Elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysics of true belief. To live indeed is to be again ourselves, which being not only a hope but an evidence in noble believers: 'tis all one to lie in St. Innocent's church yard as in the sands of Egypt; ready to be anything

in the ecstacy of being ever, and as content with six foot as the moles of Adrianus."

I subjoin the following account of this extraordinary writer's style, said to be written in a blank leaf of his works by Mr. Coleridge:

"Sir Thomas Brown is among my first favourites. Rich in various knowledge, exuberant in conceptions and conceits; contemplative, imaginative, often truly great and magnificent in his style and diction, though, doubtless, too often big, stiff, and *hyper-latinistic:* thus I might, without admixture of falsehood, describe Sir T. Brown; and my description would have this fault only, that it would be equally, or almost equally, applicable to half a dozen other writers, from the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth to the end of the reign of Charles the Second. He is indeed all this; and what he has more than all this, and peculiar to himself, I seem to convey to my own mind in some measure, by saying that he is a quiet and sublime *enthusiast*, with a strong tinge of the *fantast;* the humourist constantly mingling with, and flashing across the philosopher, as the darting colours in shot-silk play upon the main dye. In short, he has brains in his head, which is all the more interesting for a little twist in the brains. He sometimes reminds the reader of Montaigne; but from no other than the general circumstance of an egotism common to both, which, in Montaigne, is too often a mere amusing gossip, a chit-chat story of whims and peculiarities that lead to nothing; but which, in Sir Thomas Brown, is always the result of a feeling heart, conjoined with a mind of active curiosity, the natural and becoming egotism of a man, who, loving other men as himself, gains the habit and the privilege of talking about himself as familiarly as about other men. Fond of the curious, and a hunter of oddities and strangenesses, while he conceives himself with quaint and humorous gravity, an useful inquirer into physical truths and fundamental science, he loved to contemplate and discuss his own thoughts and feelings, because he found by comparison with other men's, that *they*, too, were curiosities; and so, with a perfectly graceful, interesting ease, he put *them*, too, into his museum and cabinet of rarities. In very truth, he was not mistaken, so completely does he see every thing

in a light of his own ; reading nature neither by sun, moon, nor candle-light, but by the light of the fairy glory around his own head ; that you might say, that nature had granted to *him* in perpetuity, a patent and monopoly for all his thoughts. Read his *Hydriotaphia* above all, and, in addition to the peculiarity, the exclusive *Sir Thomas Browness* of all the fancies and modes of illustration, wonder at, and admire, his *entireness* in every subject which is before him. He is *totus in illo*, he follows it, he never wanders from it, and he has no occasion to wander ; for whatever happens to be his subject, he metamorphoses all nature into it. In that 'Hydriotaphia,' or treatise on some urns dug up in Norfolk—how *earthy*, how redolent of graves and sepulchres is every line ! You have now dark mould ; now a thighbone ; now a skull ; then a bit of a mouldered coffin ; a fragment of an old tombstone, with moss in its *hic jacet ;* a ghost, a winding sheet ; or the echo of a funeral psalm wafted on a November wind : and the gayest thing you shall meet with shall be a silver nail, or gilt *anno domini*, from a perished coffin top !—The very same remark applies in the same force to the interesting, though far less interesting, treatise on the 'Quincuncial Plantations of the Ancients,' the same *entireness* of subject ! Quincunxes in heaven above ; quincunxes in earth below ; quincunxes in deity ; quincunxes in the mind of man ; quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in every thing ! In short, just turn to the last leaf of this volume, and read out aloud to yourself the seven last paragraphs of chapter 5th, beginning with the words, '*More considerable.*' But it is time for me to be in bed. In the words of Sir T. Brown (which will serve as a fine specimen of his manner,) 'But the quincunxes of Heaven (*the hyades, or five stars about the horizon, at midnight at that time*) run low, and it is time we close the five parts of knowledge ; we are unwilling to spin out our waking thoughts into the phantoms of sleep, which often continue precogitations, making cables of cobwebs, and wildernesses of handsome groves. To keep our eyes open longer, were to *act* our antipodes ? The huntsmen are up in Arabia ; and they have already passed their first sleep in Persia.' Think you, that there ever was such a reason given before for going to bed at midnight ; to wit, that it

we did not, we should be *acting* the part of our antipodes! And then, 'THE HUNTSMEN ARE UP IN ARABIA,'—what life, what fancy! Does the whimsical knight give us thus the *essence* of gunpowder tea, and call it an *opiate?**

Jeremy Taylor was a writer as different from Sir Thomas Brown as it was possible for one writer to be from another. He was a dignitary of the church, and except in matters of casuistry and controverted points, could not be supposed to enter upon speculative doubts, or give a loose to a sort of dogmatical scepticism. He had less thought, less "stuff of the conscience," less "to give us pause," in his impetuous oratory, but he had equal fancy—not the same vastness and profundity, but more richness and beauty, more warmth and tenderness. He is as rapid, as flowing, and endless, as the other is stately, abrupt, and concentrated. The eloquence of the one is like a river, that of the other is more like an aqueduct. The one is as sanguine, as the other is saturnine in the temper of his mind. Jeremy Taylor took obvious and admitted truths for granted, and illustrated them with an inexhaustible display of new and enchanting imagery. Sir Thomas Brown talks in sum-totals: Jeremy Taylor enumerates all the particulars of a subject. He gives every aspect it will bear, and never "cloys with sameness." His characteristic is enthusiastic and delightful amplification. Sir Thomas Brown

* Sir Thomas Brown has it, "The huntsmen are up in America," but Mr. Coleridge prefers reading Arabia. I do not think his account of the Urn-Burial very happy. Sir Thomas can be said to be "wholly in his subject," only because he is *wholly out of it*. There is not a word in the 'Hydriotaphia' about "a thigh-bone, or a skull, or a bit of mouldered coffin, or a tombstone, or a ghost, or a winding-sheet, or an echo," nor is "a silver nail or a gilt *anno domini* the gayest thing you shall meet with." You do not meet with them at all in the text; nor is it possible, either from the nature of the subject, or of Sir T. Brown's mind, that you should! He chose the subject of Urn-Burial, because it was "one of no mark or likelihood," totally free from the romantic prettinesses and pleasing poetical common-places with which Mr. Coleridge has adorned it, and because, being "without form and void," it gave unlimited scope to his high-raised and shadowy imagination. The motto of this author's compositions might be—"*De apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio.* He created his own materials: or to speak of him in his own language, "he saw nature in the elements of its chaos, and discerned his favourite notions in the great obscurity of nothing!"

gives the beginning and end of things, that you may judge of their place and magnitude: Jeremy Taylor describes their qualities and texture, and enters into all the items of the debtor and creditor account between life and death, grace and nature, faith and good works. He puts his heart into his fancy. He does not pretend to annihilate the passions and pursuits of mankind in the pride of philosophic indifference, but treats them as serious and momentous things, warring with conscience and the soul's health, or furnishing the means of grace and hopes of glory. In his writings, the frail stalk of human life reclines on the bosom of eternity. His 'Holy Living and Dying' is a divine pastoral. He writes to the faithful followers of Christ, as the shepherd pipes to his flock. He introduces touching and heart-felt appeals to familiar life; condescends to men of low estate; and his pious page blushes with modesty and beauty. His style is prismatic. It unfolds the colours of the rainbow; it floats like the bubble through the air; it is like innumerable dew-drops that glitter on the face of morning, and tremble as they glitter. He does not dig his way underground, but slides upon ice, borne on the winged car of fancy. The dancing light he throws upon objects is like an Aurora Borealis, playing betwixt heaven and earth—

> "Where pure Niemi's faery banks arise,
> And fringed with roses Tenglio rolls its stream."

His exhortations to piety and virtue are a gay *memento mori*. He mixes up death's-heads and amaranthine flowers; makes life a procession to the grave, but crowns it with gaudy garlands, and "rains sacrificial roses" on its path. In a word, his writings are more like fine poetry than any other prose whatever; they are a choral song in praise of virtue, and a hymn to the Spirit of the Universe. I shall give a few passages, to show how feeble and inefficient this praise is.

The 'Holy Dying' begins in this manner:—

"Man is a bubble. He is born in vanity and sin; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn into dust and forgetfulness; some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad, and very sorrowful

Others ride longer in the storm. it may be until seven years of vanity be expired, and then peradventure the sun shines hot upon their heads, and they fall into the shades below, into the cover of death and darkness of the grave to hide them But if the bubble stands the shock of a bigger drop, and outlives the chances of a child, of a careless nurse, of drowning in a pail of water, of being overlaid by a sleepy servant, or such little accidents, then the young man dances like a bubble empty and gay, and shines like a dove's neck, or the image of a rainbow, which hath no substance, and whose very imagery and colours are fantastical;' and so he dances out the gaiety of his youth, and is all the while in a storm, and endures, only because he is not knocked on the head by a drop of bigger rain, or crushed by the pressure of a load of indigested meat, or quenched by the disorder of an ill-placed humour; and to preserve a man alive in the midst of so many chances and hostilities, is as great a miracle as to create him; to preserve him from rushing into nothing, and at first to draw him up from nothing, were equally the issues of an Almighty power."

Another instance of the same rich continuity of feeling, and transparent brilliancy in working out an idea, is to be found in his description of the dawn and progress of reason:

"Some are called *at age* at fourteen, some at one-and-twenty, some never; but all men late enough; for the life of a man comes upon him slowly and insensiby. But as when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by-and-by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brows of Moses, when he was forced to wear a veil, because himself had seen the face of God; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly; so is a man's reason and his life."

This passage puts one in mind of the rising dawn and kindling skies in one of Claude's landscapes. Sir Thomas Brown has nothing of this rich finishing and exact gradation. The genius of the two men differed, as that of the painter from the mathematician. The one measures objects, the other copies them. The one shows that things are nothing out of themselves, or in relation to the whole: the one, what they are in themselves and in relation to us. Or the one may be said to apply the telescope of the mind to distant bodies; the other looks at nature in its infinite minuteness and glossy splendour through a solar microscope.

In speaking of Death, our author's style assumes the port and

withering smile of the King of Terrors. The following are scattered passages on this subject.

"It is the same harmless thing that a poor shepherd suffered yesterday or a maid-servant to-day; and at the same time in which you die, in that very night a thousand creatures die with you, some wise men, and many fools; and the wisdom of the first will not quit him, and the folly of the latter does not make him unable to die." . . . .

"I have read of a fair young German gentleman, who, while living, often refused to be pictured, but put off the importunity of his friends' desire by giving way that after a few days' burial, they might send a painter to his vault, and if they saw cause for it, draw the image of his death *unto the life*. They did so, and found his face half eaten, and his midriff and back-bone full of serpents; and so he stands pictured among his armed ancestors" . . . .

"It is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us, who are alive. Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five-and-twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange, But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as the lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age, it bowed the head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves, and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and out-worn faces. So does the fairest beauty change, and it will be as bad with you and me; and then what servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave? What friends to visit us? What officious people to cleanse away the moist and unwholesome cloud reflected upon our faces from the sides of the weeping vaults, which are the longest weepers for our funerals?"

"A man may read a sermon, the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escurial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time shall be no more: and where our kings have been crowned, their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grandsires head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like gods to die like men. There is enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the heights of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires, to sully and dash out the dissembling colours of a lustful, artificial, and imaginary beauty. There the warlike and the peaceful, the fortunate and the miserable, the beloved and the despised princes mingle their dust, and pay down their symbol of mortality, and tell all the world that when we die, our ashes shall be equal to kings, and

our accounts easier, and our pains for our crimes shall be less.* To my apprehension, it is a sad record which is left by Athenæus concerning Ninus the great Assyrian monarch, whose life and death is summed up in these words: 'Ninus the Assyrian had an ocean of gold, and other riches more than the sand in the Caspian sea; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi: nor touched his god with the sacred rod according to the laws: he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the deity, nor administered justice, nor spake to the people; nor numbered them: but he was most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead, behold his sepulchre, and now hear where Ninus is. Sometime I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust is all my portion: the wealth with which I was blessed, my enemies meeting together shall carry away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to hell: and when I went thither, I neither carried gold, nor horse, nor silver chariot. I that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust.'"

He who wrote in this manner also wore a mitre, and is now a heap of dust: but when the name of Jeremy Taylor is no longer remembered with reverence, genius will have become a mockery, and virtue an empty shade!

* The above passage is an inimitably fine paraphrase of some lines on the tombs in Westminster Abbey by F. Beaumont. It shows how near Jeremy Taylor's style was to poetry, and how well it weaves in with it.

"Mortality, behold, and fear,
What a charge of flesh is here!
Think how many royal bones
Sleep within this heap of stones:
Here they lie, had realms and lands,
Who now want strength to stir their hands.
Where from their pulpits, sealed in dust,
They preach 'In greatness is no trust.'
Here's an acre sown indeed
With the richest, royal'st seed
That the earth did e'er suck in,
Since the first man died for sin.
Here the bones of birth have cried,
Though gods they were, as men they died.
Here are sands, ignoble things,
Dropp'd from the ruin'd sides of kings.
Here's a world of pomp and state
Buried in dust, once dead by fate."

LECTURE VIII.

On the Spirit of Ancient and Modern Literature—On the German Drama, contrasted with that of the Age of Elizabeth.

Before I proceed to the more immediate subject of the present Lecture, I wish to say a few words of one or two writers in our own time, who have imbibed the spirit and imitated the language of our elder dramatists. Among these I may reckon the ingenious author of 'The Apostate' and 'Evadne,' who, in the last-mentioned play, in particular, has availed himself with much judgment and spirit of the tragedy of 'The Traitor,' by old Shirley. It would be curious to hear the opinion of a professed admirer of the Ancients, and captious despiser of the Moderns, with respect to this production, before he knew it was a copy of an old play. Shirley himself lived in the time of Charles I. and died in the beginning of Charles II.;* but he had formed his style on that of the preceding age, and had written the greatest number of his plays in conjunction with Jonson, Decker, and Massinger. He was "the last of those fair clouds that on the bosom of bright honour sailed in long procession, beautiful and calm." The name of Mr. Tobin is familiar to every lover of the drama. His 'Honey-Moon' is evidently founded on 'The Taming of a Shrew,' and Duke Aranza has been pronounced by a polite critic to be "an elegant Petruchio." The plot is taken from Shakspeare; but the language and sentiments, both of this play and of 'The Curfew,' bear a more direct resemblance to the flowery tenderness of Beaumont and Fletcher, who were, I believe, the favourite study of our author. Mr. Lamb's 'John Woodvil' may be considered as a dramatic fragment, intended for the closet rather than the stage. It would sound oddly in the lobbies of either theatre, amidst the noise and

* He and his wife both died from fright, occasioned by the great fire of London in 1665, and lie buried in St. Giles's churchyard.

glare and bustle of resort; but "there where we have treasured up our hearts," in silence and in solitude, it may claim and find a place for itself. It might be read with advantage in the still retreats of Sherwood Forest, where it would throw a new-born light on the green, sunny glades; the tenderest flower might seem to drink of the poet's spirit, and "the tall deer that paints a dancing shadow of his horns in the swift brook," might seem to do so in mockery of the poet's thought. Mr. Lamb, with a modesty often attendant on fine feeling, has loitered too long in the humbler avenues leading to the temple of ancient genius, instead of marching boldly up to the sanctuary, as many with half his pretensions would have done: "but fools rush in, where angels fear to tread." The defective or objectionable parts of this production are imitations of the defects of the old writers: its beauties are his own, though in their manner. The touches of thought and passion are often as pure and delicate as they are profound; and the character of his heroine Margaret is perhaps the finest and most genuine female character out of Shakspeare. This tragedy was not critic-proof: it had its cracks and flaws and breaches, through which the enemy marched in triumphant. The station which he had chosen was not indeed a walled town, but a straggling village, which the experienced engineers proceeded to lay waste; and he is pinned down in more than one Review of the day, as an exemplary warning to indiscreet writers, who venture beyond the pale of periodical taste and conventional criticism. Mr. Lamb was thus hindered by the taste of the polite vulgar from writing as he wished; his own taste would not allow him to write like them: and he (perhaps wisely) turned critic and prose-writer in his own defence. To say that he has written better about Shakspeare, and about Hogarth, than anybody else, is saying little in his praise. A gentleman of the name of Cornwall, who has lately published a volume of Dramatic Scenes, has met with a very different reception, but I cannot say that he has *deserved* it. He has made no sacrifice at the shrine of fashionable affectation or false glitter. There is nothing common-place in his style to soothe the complacency of dulness, nothing extravagant to startle the grossness of ignorance. He writes with simplicity, delicacy, and fervour;

continues a scene from Shakspeare, or works out a hint from Boccacio, in the spirit of his originals, and though he bows with reverence at the altar of those great masters, he keeps an eye curiously intent on nature, and a mind awake to the admonitions of his own heart. As he has begun, so let him proceed. Any one who will turn to the glowing and richly-coloured conclusion of 'The Falcon,' will, I think, agree with me in this wish!

There are four sorts or schools of tragedy with which I am acquainted. The first is the antique or classical. This consisted, I apprehend, in the introduction of persons on the stage, speaking, feeling, and acting *according to nature*, that is, according to the impression of given circumstances on the passions and mind of man in those circumstances, but limited by the physical conditions of time and place, as to its external form, and to a certain dignity of attitude and expression, selection in the figures, and unity in their grouping, as in a statue or bas-relief. The second is the Gothic or romantic, or, as it might be called, the historical or poetical tragedy, and differs from the former, only in having a larger scope in the design and boldness in the execution; that is, it is the dramatic representation of nature and passion emancipated from the precise imitation of an actual event in place and time, from the same fastidiousness in the choice of the materials, and with the license of the epic and fanciful form added to it in the range of the subject and the decorations of language. This is particularly the style or school of Shakspeare and of the best writers of the age of Elizabeth, and the one immediately following. Of this class, or genus, the *tragédie bourgeoise* is a variety, and the antithesis of the classical form. The third sort is the French or common-place rhetorical style, which is founded on the antique as to its form and subject matter; but instead of individual nature, real passion, or imagination growing out of real passion and the circumstances of the speaker, it deals only in vague, imposing, and laboured declamations, or descriptions of nature, dissertations on the passions, and pompous flourishes which never entered any head but the author's, have no existence in nature which they pretend to identify, and are not dramatic at all, but purely didactic. The

fourth and last is the German or paradoxical style, which differs from the others in representing men as acting not from the impulse of feeling, or as debating common-place questions of morality, but as the organs and mouth-pieces (that is, as acting, speaking, and thinking under the sole influence) of certain extravagant speculative opinions, abstracted from all existing customs, prejudices, and institutions. It is my present business to speak chiefly of the first and last of these.

Sophocles differs from Shakspeare as a Doric portico does from Westminster Abbey. The principle of the one is simplicity and harmony, of the other richness and power. The one relies on form or proportion, the other on quantity, and variety, and prominence of parts. The one owes its charm to a certain union and regularity of feeling, the other adds to its effect from complexity and the combination of the greatest extremes. The classical appeals to sense and habit; the Gothic or romantic strikes from novelty, strangeness, and contrast. Both are founded in essential and indestructible principles of human nature. We may prefer the one to the other, as we choose, but to set up an arbitrary and bigotted standard of excellence in consequence of this preference, and to exclude either one or the other from poetry or art, is to deny the existence of the first principles of the human mind, and to war with nature, which is the height of weakness and arrogance at once. There are some observations on this subject in a late number of the 'Edinburgh Review,' from which I shall here make a pretty long extract:

"The most obvious distinction between the two styles, the classical and the romantic, is, that the one is conversant with objects that are grand or beautiful in themselves, or in consequence of obvious and universal associations; the other, with those that are interesting only by the force of circumstances and imagination. A Grecian temple, for instance, is a classical object: it is beautiful in itself, and excites immediate admiration. But the ruins of a Gothic castle have no beauty or symmetry to attract the eye; and yet they excite a more powerful and romantic interest, from the ideas with which they are habitually associated. If, in addition to this, we are told that this is Macbeth's castle, the scene of the murder of Duncan, the interest will be

instantly heightened to a sort of pleasing horror. The classical idea or form of any thing, it may also be observed, remains always the same, and suggests nearly the same impressions; but the associations of ideas belonging to the romantic character may vary infinitely, and take in the whole range of nature and accident. Antigone, in Sophocles, waiting near the grove of the Furies—Electra, in Æschylus, offering sacrifice at the tomb of Agamemnon—are classical subjects, because the circumstances and the characters have a correspondent dignity, and an immediate interest, from their mere designation. Florimel, in Spenser, where she is described sitting on the ground in the Witch's hut, is not classical, though in the highest degree poetical and romantic: for the incidents and situation are in themselves mean and disagreeable, till they are redeemed by the genius of the poet, and converted, by the very contrast, into a source of the utmost pathos and elevation of sentiment. Othello's handkerchief is not classical, though "there was magic in the web:"—it is only a powerful instrument of passion and imagination. Even Lear is not classical; for he is a poor crazy old man, who has nothing sublime about him but his afflictions, and who dies of a broken heart.

"Schlegel somewhere compares the Furies of Æschylus to the Witches of Shakspeare—we think without much reason. Perhaps Shakspeare has surrounded the weird sisters with associations as terrible, and even more mysterious, strange and fantastic, than the Furies of Æschylus; but the traditionary beings themselves are not so petrific. These are of marble—their look alone must blast the beholder;—those are of air, bubbles; and though 'so withered and so wild in their attire,' it is their spells alone which are fatal. They owe their power to metaphysical aid: but the others contain all that is dreadful in their corporeal figures. In this we see the distinct spirit of the classical and the romantic mythology. The serpents that twine round the head of the Furies are not to be trifled with, though they implied no preternatural power. The bearded Witches in Macbeth are in themselves grotesque and ludicrous, except as this strange deviation from nature staggers our imagination, and leads us to expect and to believe in all incredible things. They appal the fa-

culties by what they say or do;—the others are intolerable, even to sight.

"Our author is right in affirming, that the true way to understand the plays of Sophocles and Æschylus, is to study them before the groupes of the Niobe or the Laocoon. If we can succeed in explaining this analogy, we shall have solved nearly the whole difficulty. For it is certain, that there are exactly the same powers of mind displayed in the poetry of the Greeks as in their statues. Their poetry is exactly what their sculptors might have written. Both are exquisite imitations of nature; the one in marble, the other in words. It is evident that the Greek poets had the same perfect idea of the subjects they described as the Greek sculptors had of the objects they represented; and they give as much of this absolute truth of imitation as can be given by words. But in this direct and simple imitation of nature, as in describing the form of a beautiful woman, the poet is greatly inferior to the sculptor; it is in the power of illustration, in comparing it to other things, and suggesting other ideas of beauty or love, that he has an entirely new source of imagination opened to him: and of this power the moderns have made at least a bolder and more frequent use than the ancients. The description of Helen in Homer is a description of what might have happened and been seen, as 'that she moved with grace, and that the old men rose up with reverence as she passed;' the description of Belphœbe in Spenser is a description of what was only visible to the eye of the poet:

> "Upon her eyelids many graces sat,
> Under the shadow of her even brows."

The description of the soldiers going to battle in Shakspeare, 'all plumed like ostriches, like eagles newly baited, wanton as goats, wild as young bulls,' is too bold, figurative, and profuse of dazzling images, for the mild, equable tone of classical poetry, which never loses sight of the object in the illustration. The ideas of the ancients were too exact and definite, too much attached to the material form or vehicle by which they were conveyed, to admit of those rapid combinations, those unrestrained flights of fancy, which, glancing from heaven to earth, unite the most opposite

extremes, and draw the happiest illustrations from things the most remote. The two principles of imitation and imagination, indeed, are not only distinct, but almost opposite.

"The great difference, then, which we find between the classical and the romantic style, between ancient and modern poetry, is, that the one more frequently describes things as they are interesting in themselves—the other for the sake of the associations of ideas connected with them; that the one dwells more on the immediate impressions of objects on the senses—the other on the ideas which they suggest to the imagination. The one is the poetry of form, the other of effect. The one gives only what is necessarily implied in the subject, the other all that can possibly arise out of it. The one seeks to identify the imitation with the external object—clings to it—is inseparable from it—is either that or nothing; the other seeks to identify the original impression with whatever else, within the range of thought or feeling, can strengthen, relieve, adorn, or elevate it. Hence the severity and simplicity of the Greek tragedy, which excluded everything foreign or unnecessary to the subject. Hence the Unities: for, in order to identify the imitation as much as possible with the reality, and leave nothing to mere imagination, it was necessary to give the same coherence and consistency to the different parts of a story, as to the different limbs of a statue. Hence the beauty and grandeur of their materials; for, deriving their power over the mind from the truth of the imitation, it was necessary that the subject which they made choice of, and from which they could not depart, should be in itself grand and beautiful. Hence the perfection of their execution; which consisted in giving the utmost harmony, delicacy, and refinement to the details of a given subject. Now, the characteristic excellence of the moderns is the reverse of all this. As, according to our author, the poetry of the Greeks is the same as their sculpture; so, he says, our own more nearly resembles painting—where the artist can relieve and throw back his figures at pleasure—use a greater variety of contrasts—and where light and shade, like the colours of fancy, are reflected on the different objects. The Muse of classical poetry should be represented as a beautiful naked figure; the Muse of modern poetry should be represented clothed, and

with wings. The first has the advantage in point of form; the last in colour and motion.

"Perhaps we may trace this difference to something analogous in physical organization, situation, religion, and manners. First, the physical organization of the Greeks seems to have been more perfect, more susceptible of external impressions, and more in harmony with external nature than ours, who have not the same advantages of climate and constitution. Born of a beautiful and vigorous race, with quick senses and a clear understanding, and placed under a mild heaven, they gave the fullest development to their external faculties: and where all is perceived easily, every thing is perceived in harmony and proportion. It is the stern genius of the North which drives men back upon their own resources, which makes them slow to perceive, and averse to feel, and which, by rendering them insensible to the single, successive impressions of things, requires their collective and combined force to rouse the imagination violently and unequally. It should be remarked, however, that the early poetry of some of the Eastern nations has even more of that irregularity, wild enthusiasm, and disproportioned grandeur, which has been considered as the distinguishing character of the Northern nations.

"Again, a good deal may be attributed to the state of manners and political institutions. The ancient Greeks were warlike tribes encamped in cities. They had no other country than that which was enclosed within the walls of the town in which they lived. Each individual belonged, in the first instance, to the state; and his relations to it were so close as to take away, in a great measure, all personal independence and free-will. Every one was mortised to his place in society, and had his station assigned him as part of the political machine, which could only subsist by strict subordination and regularity. Every man was, as it were, perpetually on duty, and his faculties kept constant watch and ward. Energy of purpose and intensity of observation became the necessary characteristics of such a state of society; and the general principle communicated itself from this ruling concern for the public, to morals, to art, to language, to every thing. The tragic poets of Greece were among her best soldiers; and it is no wonder that they were as severe in their

poetry as in their discipline. Their swords and their styles carved out their way with equal sharpness. After all, however, the tragedies of Sophocles, which are the perfection of the classical style, are hardly tragedies in our sense of the word.* They do not exhibit the extremity of human passion and suffering. The object of modern tragedy is to represent the soul utterly subdued as it were, or at least convulsed and overthrown, by passion or misfortune. That of the ancients was to show how the greatest crimes could be perpetrated with the least remorse, and the greatest calamities borne with the least emotion. Firmness of purpose and calmness of sentiment are their leading characteristics. Their heroes and heroines act and suffer as if they were always in the presence of a higher power, or as if human life itself were a religious ceremony, performed in honour of the Gods and of the State. The mind is not shaken to its centre; the whole being is not crushed or broken down. Contradictory motives are not accumulated; the utmost force of imagination and passion is not exhausted to overcome the repugnance of the will to crime; the contrast and combination of outward accidents are not called in to overwhelm the mind with the whole weight of unexpected calamity. The dire conflict of the feelings, the desperate struggle with fortune, are seldom there All is conducted with a fatal composure; prepared and submitted to with inflexible constancy, as if Nature were only an instrument in the hands of Fate.

"This state of things was afterwards continued under the Roman empire. In the ages of chivalry and romance, which, after a considerable interval, succeeded its dissolution, and which have stamped their character on modern genius and literature all was reversed. Society was again resolved into its component parts; and the world was, in a manner, to begin anew The ties which bound the citizen and the soldier to the state being loosened, each person was thrown back into the circle of the domestic affections, or left to pursue his doubtful way to fame and fortune alone. This interval of time might be accordingly supposed to give birth to all that was constant in attachment, ad

* The difference in the tone of moral sentiment is the greatest of all others

venturous in action, strange, wild, and extravagant in invention. Human life took the shape of a busy, voluptuous dream, where the imagination was now lost amidst 'antres vast and deserts idle;' or suddenly transported to stately palaces, echoing with dance and song. In this uncertainty of events, this fluctuation of hopes and fears, all objects became dim, confused, and vague. Magicians, dwarfs, giants, followed in the train of romance; and Orlando's enchanted sword, the horn which he carried with him, and which he blew thrice at Roncesvalles, and Rogero's winged horse, were not sufficient to protect them in their unheard-of encounters, or deliver them from their inextricable difficulties. It was a return to the period of the early heroic ages; but tempered by the difference of domestic manners, and the spirit of religion. The marked difference in the relation of the sexes arose from the freedom of choice in women: which, from being the slaves of the will and passions of men, converted them into the arbiters of their fate, which introduced the modern system of gallantry, and first made love a feeling of the heart, founded on mutual affection and esteem. The leading virtues of the Christian religion, self-denial and generosity, assisted in producing the same effect. Hence the spirit of chivalry, of romantic love and honour!

"The mythology of the romantic poetry differed from the received religion: both differed essentially from the classical. The religion or mythology of the Greeks was nearly allied to their poetry: it was material and definite. The Pagan system reduced the gods to the human form, and elevated the powers of inanimate nature to the same standard. Statues carved out of the finest marble, represented the objects of their religious worship in airy porticos, in solemn temples and consecrated groves. Mercury was seen 'new lighted on some heaven-kissing hill;' and the Naiad or Dryad came gracefully forth as the personified genius of the stream or wood. All was subjected to the senses. The Christian religion, on the contrary, is essentially spiritual and abstracted: it is 'the evidence of things unseen.' In the Heathen mythology, form is everywhere predominant; in the Christian, we find only unlimited, undefined power. The imagination alone 'broods over the immense abyss, and makes it pregnant.' There is, in the

habitual belief of an universal, invisible principle of all things, a vastness and obscurity which confounds our perceptions, while it exalts our piety. A mysterious awe surrounds the doctrines of the Christian faith: the infinite is everywhere before us, whether we turn to reflect on what is revealed to us of the divine nature or our own.

"History, as well as religion, has contributed to enlarge the bounds of imagination; and both together, by showing past and future objects at an interminable distance, have accustomed the mind to contemplate and take an interest in the obscure and shadowy. The ancients were more circumscribed within 'the ignorant present time'—spoke only their own language—were conversant only with their own customs—were acquainted only with the events of their own history. The mere lapse of time then, aided by the art of printing, has served to accumulate an endless mass of mixed and contradictory materials; and, by extending our knowledge to a greater number of things, has made our particular ideas less perfect and distinct. The constant reference to a former state of manners and literature is a marked feature in modern poetry. We are always talking of the Greeks and Romans:—*they* never said anything of us. This circumstance has tended to give a certain abstract elevation, and ethereal refinement to the mind, without strengthening it. We are lost in wonder at what has been done, and dare not think of emulating it. The earliest modern poets, accordingly, may be conceived to hail the glories of the antique world, dawning through the dark abyss of time; while revelation, on the other hand, opened its path to the skies. So Dante represents himself as conducted by Virgil to the shades below; while Beatrice welcomes him to the abodes of the blest."

The French are the only people in modern Europe who have professedly imitated the ancients; but from their being utterly unlike the Greeks or Romans, they have produced a dramatic style of their own, which is neither classical nor romantic. The same article contains the following censure of this style:

"The true poet identifies the reader with the characters he represents; the French poet only identifies him with himself. There is scarcely a single page of their tragedy which fairly

throws nature open to you. It is tragedy in masquerade. We never get beyond conjecture and reasoning—beyond the general impression of the situation of the persons—beyond general reflections on their passions—beyond general descriptions of objects. We never get at that something more, which is what we are in search of, namely, what we ourselves should feel in the same situations. The true poet transports you to the scene—you see and hear what is passing—you catch, from the lips of the persons concerned, what lies nearest to their hearts;—the French poet takes you into his closet, and reads you a lecture upon it. The *chef-d'œuvres* of their stage, then, are, at best, only ingenious paraphrases of nature. The dialogue is a tissue of common-places, of laboured declamations on human life, of learned casuistry on the passions, on virtue and vice, which any one else might make just as well as the person speaking; and yet, what the persons themselves would say, is all we want to know, and all for which the poet puts them into those situations."

After the Restoration, that is, after the return of the exiled family of the Stuarts from France, our writers transplanted this artificial, monotonous, and imposing common-place style into England, by imitations and translations, where it could not be expected to take deep root, and produce wholesome fruits, and where it has indeed given rise to little but turgidity and rant in men of original force of genius, and to insipidity and formality in feebler copyists. Otway is the only writer of this school, who, in the lapse of a century and a half, has produced a tragedy (upon the classic or regular model) of indisputable excellence and lasting interest. The merit of 'Venice Preserved' is not confined to its effect on the stage, or to the opportunity it affords for the display of the powers of the actors in it, of a Jaffier, a Pierre, a Belvidera: it reads as well in the closet, and loses little or none of its power of rivetting breathless attention, and stirring the deepest yearnings of affection. It has passages of great beauty in themselves (detached from the fable) touches of true nature and pathos, though none equal or indeed comparable to what we meet with in Shakspeare and other writers of that day; but the awful suspense of the situations, the conflict of duties and passions, the intimate bonds that unite the charac-

ters together, and that are violently rent asunder like the parting of soul and body, the solemn march of the tragical events to the fatal catastrophe that winds up and closes over all, give to this production of Otway's Muse a charm and power that bind it like a spell on the public mind, and have made it a proud and inseparable adjunct of the English stage. Thomson has given it due honour in his feeling verse, when he exclaims:

> "See o'er the stage the Ghost of Hamlet stalks,
> Othelo rages, poor Monimia mourns,
> And Belvidera pours her soul in love."

There is a mixture of effeminacy, of luxurious and cowardly indulgence of his wayward sensibility, in Jaffier's character, which is, however, finely relieved by the bold, intrepid villany and contemptuous irony of Pierre, while it is excused by the difficulties of his situation, and the loveliness of Belvidera; but in the 'Orphan' there is little else but this voluptuous effeminacy of sentiment and mawkish distress, which strikes directly at the root of that mental fortitude and heroic cast of thought which alone makes tragedy endurable—that renders its sufferings pathetic, or its struggles sublime. Yet there are lines and passages in it of extreme tenderness and beauty; and few persons, I conceive (judging from my own experience) will read it at a certain time of life without shedding tears over it as fast as the "Arabian trees their medicinal gums." Otway always touched the reader, for he had himself a heart. We may be sure that he blotted his page often with his tears, on which so many drops have since fallen from glistening eyes, "that sacred pity had engendered there." He had susceptibility of feeling and warmth of genius; but he had not equal depth of thought or loftiness of imagination, and indulged his mere sensibility too much, yielding to the immediate impression or emotion excited in his own mind, and not placing himself enough in the minds and situations of others, or following the workings of nature sufficiently with keenness of eye and strength of will into its heights and depths, its strongholds as well as its weak sides. The 'Orphan' was attempted to be revived some time since, with the advantage of Miss O'Neill playing the part of Monimia. It, however, did not

entirely succeed (as it appeared at the time) from the plot turning all on one circumstance, and that hardly of a nature to be obtruded on the public notice. The incidents and characters are taken almost literally from an old play by Robert Tailor, called 'The Hog hath Lost his Pearl.'

Addison's 'Cato,' in spite of Dennis's criticism, still retains possession of the stage with all its unities. My love and admiration for Addison is as great as any person's, let that other person be who he will; but it is not founded on his 'Cato,' in extolling which Whigs and Tories contended in loud applause. The interest of this play (bating that shadowy regret that always clings to and flickers round the form of free antiquity) is confined to the declamation, which is feeble in itself, and not heard on the stage. I have seen Mr. Kemble in this part repeat the 'Soliloquy on Death' without a line being distinctly heard; nothing was observable but the thoughtful motion of his lips, and the occasional extension of his hand in sign of doubts suggested or resolved; yet this beautiful and expressive dumb-show, with the propriety of his costume, and the elegance of his attitude and figure, excited the most lively interest, and kept attention even more on the stretch, to catch every imperfect syllable or speaking gesture. There is nothing, however, in the play to excite ridicule, or shock by absurdity, except the love scenes, which are passed over as what the spectator has no proper concern with; and however feeble or languid the interest produced by a dramatic exhibition, unless there is some positive stumbling-block thrown in the way, or gross offence given to an audience, it is generally suffered to linger on to a *euthanasia*, instead of dying a violent and premature death. If an author (particularly an author of high reputation) can contrive to preserve a uniform degree of insipidity, he is nearly sure of impunity. It is the mixture of great faults with splendid passages (the more striking from the contrast) that it is inevitable damnation. Every one must have seen the audience tired out and watching for an opportunity to wreak their vengeance on the author, and yet not able to accomplish their wish, because no one part seemed more tiresome or worthless than another. The philosophic mantle of Addison's 'Cato,' when it no longer spreads its graceful folds on

the shoulders of John Kemble, will I fear fall to the ground; nor do I think Mr. Kean likely to pick it up again, with dauntless ambition or stoic pride, like that of Coriolanus. He could not play Cato (at least I think not) for the same reason that he will play Coriolanus. He can always play a living man; he cannot play a lifeless statue.

Dryden's plays have not come down to us, except in the collection of his printed works. The last of them that was on the list of regular acting plays was 'Don Sebastian.' 'The Mask of Arthur and Emmeline' was the other day revived at one of our theatres without much success. 'Alexander the Great' is by Lee, who wrote some things in conjunction with Dryden, and who had far more power and passion of an irregular and turbulent kind, bordering upon constitutional morbidity, and who might have done better things (as we see from his 'Œdipus') had not his genius been perverted and rendered worse than abortive by carrying the vicious manner of his age to the greatest excess. Dryden's plays are perhaps the fairest specimen of what this manner was. I do not know how to describe it better than by saying that it is one continued and exaggerated common-place. All the characters are put into a swaggering attitude of dignity, and tricked out in the pomp of ostentatious drapery. The images are extravagant, yet not far-fetched; they are outrageous caricatures of obvious thoughts; the language oscillates between bombast and pathos: the characters are noisy pretenders to virtue and shallow boasters in vice; the versification is laboured and monotonous, quite unlike the admirably free and flowing rhyme of his satires, in which he felt the true inspiration of his subject, and could find modulated sounds to express it. Dryden had no dramatic genius either in tragedy or comedy. In his plays he mistakes blasphemy for sublimity, and ribaldry for wit. He had so little notion of his own powers, that he has put Milton's 'Paradise Lost' into dramatic rhyme to make Adam look like a fine gentleman; and has added a double love-plot to 'The Tempest,' to "relieve the killing languor and over-laboured lassitude" of that solitude of the imagination, in which Shakspeare had left the inhabitants of his Enchanted Island. I will give two passages out of 'Don Sebastian,' in illustration of what I have said above of this mock-heroic style.

Almeyda advising Sebastian to fly from the power of Muley-Moloch, addresses him thus:

> "Leave then the luggage of your fate behind;
> To make your flight more easy, leave Almeyda.
> Nor think me left a base, ignoble prey,
> Exposed to this inhuman tyrant's lust.
> My virtue is a guard beyond my strength;
> And death my last defence within my call."

Sebastian answers very gravely:

> "Death may be called in vain, and cannot come:
> Tyrants can tie him up from your relief:
> Nor has a Christian privilege to die.
> Alas, thou art too young in thy new faith:
> Brutus and Cato might discharge their souls,
> And give them furloughs for another world:
> But we, like sentries, are obliged to stand,
> In starless nights, and wait the appointed hour."

Sebastian then urging her to prevent the tyrant's designs by an instant marriage, she says:

> "'Tis late to join, when we must part so soon.
> *Sebastian.* Nay, rather let us haste it, ere we part:
> Our souls, for want of that acquaintance here,
> May wander in the starry walks above,
> And, forced on worse companions, miss ourselves."

In the scene with Muley-Moloch, where she makes intercession for Sebastian's life, she says:

> "My father's, mother's, brother's death I pardon:
> That's somewhat sure, a mighty sum of murder,
> Of innocent and kindred blood struck off.
> My prayers and penance shall discount for these,
> And beg of Heaven to charge the bill on me:
> Behold what price I offer, and how dear
> To buy Sebastian's life.
> *Emperour.* Let after-reckonings trouble fearful fools;
> I'll stand the trial of those trivial crimes:
> But since thou begg'st me to prescribe my terms,
> The only I can offer are thy love;
> And this one day of respite to resolve.

Grant or deny, for thy next word is Fate;
And Fate is deaf to prayer.
Almeyda. May heav'n be so
At thy last breath to thine: I curse thee not:
For who can better curse the plague or devil
Than to be what they are? That curse be thine
Now do not speak, Sebastian, for you need not,
But die, for I resign your life: Look, heav'n,
Almeyda dooms her dear Sebastian's death!
But is there heaven, for I begin to doubt?
The skies are hush'd; no grumbling thunders roll:
Now take your swing, ye impious: sin, unpunish'd.
Eternal Providence seems over-watch'd,
And with a slumbering nod assents to murder . . .
Farewell, my lost Sebastian!
I do not beg, I challenge justice now:
O Powers, if Kings be your peculiar care,
Why plays this wretch with your prerogative?
Now flash him dead, now crumble him to ashes:
Or henceforth live confined in your own palace;
And look not idly out upon a world
That is no longer yours."

These passages, with many like them, will be found in the first scene of the third act.

The occasional striking expressions, such as that of souls at the resurrection "fumbling for their limbs," are the language of strong satire and habitual disdain, not proper to tragic or serious poetry.

After Dryden there is no writer that has acquired much reputation as a tragic poet for the next hundred years. In the hands of his successors, the Smiths, the Hughes, the Hills, the Murphys, the Dr. Johnsons, of the reigns of the first Georges, tragedy seemed almost afraid to know itself, and certainly did not stand where it had done a hundred and fifty years before. It had degenerated by regular and studied gradations into the most frigid, insipid, and insignificant of all things. It faded to a shade, it tapered to a point, "fine by degrees, and beautifully less." I do not believe there is a single play of this period which could be read with any degree of interest or even patience, by a modern reader of poetry, if we except the productions of Southern, Lillo and Moore, the authors of 'The Gamester,

'Oroonoko,' and 'Fatal Curiosity,' and who, instead of mounting on classic stilts and making rhetorical flourishes, went out of the established road to seek for truth and nature and effect in the commonest life and lowest situations. In short, the only tragedy of this period is that to which their productions gave a name, and which has been called in contradistinction by the French, and with an express provision for its merits and defects, the '*Tragédie bourgeoise*.' An anecdote is told of the first of these writers by Gray, in one of his letters, dated from Horace Walpole's country-seat, about the year 1740, who says, "Old Mr. Southern is here, who is now above 80; a very agreeable old man, at least I think so when I look in his face, and think of Isabella and Oroonoko." It is pleasant to see these traits of attachment and gratitude kept up in successive generations of poets to one another, and also to find that the same works of genius that have "sent us weeping to our beds," and made us "rise sadder and wiser on the morrow morn," have excited just the same fondness of affection in others before we were born; and it is to be hoped will do so after we are dead. Our best feelings, and those on which we pride ourselves most, and with most reason, are perhaps the commonest of all others.

Up to the present reign, and during the best part of it (with another solitary exception, 'Douglas,' which, with all its feebleness and extravagance, has in its style and sentiments a good deal of poetical and romantic beauty,) Tragedy wore the face of the Goddess of Dulness in the 'Dunciad,' serene, torpid, sickly, lethargic and affected, till it was roused from its trance by the blast of the French Revolution, and by the loud trampling of the German Pegasus on the English stage, which now appeared as pawing to get free from its ancient trammels, and rampant shook off the incumbrance of all former examples, opinions, prejudices, and principles. If we have not been alive and well since this period, at least we have been alive, and it is better to be alive than dead. The German tragedy (and our own, which is only a branch of it,) aims at effect, and produces it often in the highest degree; and it does this by going all the lengths not only of instinctive feeling, but of speculative opinion, and startling the hearer by overturning all the established maxims of society, and

setting at nought all the received rules of composition. It cannot be said of this style that in it "decorum is the principal thing." It is the violation of decorum that is its first and last principle, the beginning, middle, and end. It is an insult and defiance to Aristotle's definition of tragedy. The action is not grave, but extravagant: the fable is not probable, but improbable: the favourite characters are not only low, but vicious: the sentiments are such as do not become the person into whose mouth they are put, nor that of any other person: the language is a mixture of metaphysical jargon and flaring prose: the moral is immorality. In spite of all this, a German tragedy is a good thing. It is a fine hallucination: it is a noble madness, and as there is a pleasure in madness which none but madmen know, so there is a pleasure in reading a German play to be found in no other. The world have thought so: they go to see 'The Stranger,' they go to see 'Lovers' Vows,' and 'Pizarro,' they have their eyes wide open all the time, and almost cry them out before they come away, and therefore they go again. There is something in the style that hits the temper of men's minds; that, if it does not hold the mirror up to nature, yet "shows the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure." It embodies, it sets off and aggrandizes in all the pomp of action, in all the vehemence of hyperbolical declamation, in scenery, in dress, in music, in the glare of the senses, and the glow of sympathy, the extreme opinions which are floating in our time, and which have struck their roots deep and wide below the surface of the public mind. We are no longer as formerly, heroes in warlike enterprize; martyrs to religious faith; but we are all the partisans of a political system, and devotees to some theory of moral sentiments. The modern style of tragedy is not assuredly made up of pompous common-place, but it is a tissue of philosophical, political, and moral paradoxes. I am not saying whether these paradoxes are true or false: all that I mean to state is, that they are utterly at variance with old opinions, with established rules and existing institutions; that it is this tug of war between the inert prejudice and the startling novelty which is to batter it down (first on the stage of the theatre, and afterwards on the stage of the world,) that gives the

excitement and the zest. We see the natural always pitted against the social man; and the majority, who are not of the privileged classes, take part with the former. The hero is a sort of metaphysical Orson, armed not with teeth and a club, but with hard sayings and unanswerable sentences, ticketed and labelled with extracts and mottos from the modern philosophy. This common representative of mankind is a natural son of some feudal lord, or wealthy baron: and he comes to claim, as a matter of course and of simple equity, the rich reversion of the title and estates to which he has a right by the bounty of nature and the privilege of his birth. This produces a very edifying scene, and the proud, unfeeling, unprincipled baron is hooted from the stage. A young woman, a sempstress, or a waiting-maid of much beauty and accomplishment, who would not think of matching with a fellow of low birth or fortune for the world, falls in love with the heir of an immense estate out of pure regard to his mind and person, and thinks it strange that rank and opulence do not follow as natural appendages in the train of sentiment. A lady of fashion, wit, and beauty, forfeits the sanctity of her marriage-vow, but preserves the inviolability of her sentiments and character,

"Pure in the last recesses of the mind"—

and triumphs over false opinion and prejudice, like gold out of the fire, the brighter for the ordeal. A young man turns robber and captain of a gang of banditti; and the wonder is to see the heroic ardour of his sentiments, his aspirations after the most godlike goodness and unsullied reputation, working their way through the repulsiveness of his situation, and making use of fortune only as a foil to nature. The principle of contrast and contradiction is here made use of, and no other. All qualities are reversed: virtue is always at odds with vice, "which shall be which:" the internal character and external situation, the actions and the sentiments, are never in accord: you are to judge of every thing by contraries: those that exalt themselves are abased, and those that should be humbled are exalted: the high places and strongholds of power and greatness are crumbled in the dust; opinions totter, feelings are brought into ques-

tion, and the world is turned upside down, with all things in it! "There is some soul of goodness in things evil"—and there is some soul of goodness in all this. The world and every thing in it is not just what it ought to be, or what it pretends to be; or such extravagant and prodigious paradoxes would be driven from the stage—would meet with sympathy in no human breast, high or low, young or old. "*There's something rotten in the state of Denmark.*" Opinion is not truth: appearance is not reality: power is not beneficence: rank is not wisdom: nobility is not the only virtue: riches are not happiness: desert and success are different things: actions do not always speak the character any more than words. We feel this, and do justice to the romantic extravagance of the German Muse.

In Germany, where this *outré* style of treating every thing established and adventitious was carried to its height, there were, as we learn from 'The Sorrows of Werter,' seven-and-twenty ranks in society, each raised above the other, and of which the one above did not speak to the one below it. Is it wonderful that the poets and philosophers of Germany, the discontented men of talent, who thought and mourned for themselves and their fellows, the Goëthes, the Lessings, the Schillers, the Kotzebues, felt a sudden and irresistible impulse by a convulsive effort to tear aside this factitious drapery of society, and to throw off that load of bloated prejudice, of maddening pride and superannuated folly, that pressed down every energy of their nature and stifled the breath of liberty, of truth and genius, in their bosoms? These Titans of our days tried to throw off the dead weight that encumbered them, and in so doing, warred not against heaven, but against earth. The same writers (as far as I have seen) have made the only incorrigible Jacobins, and their school of poetry is the only real school of Radical Reform.

In reasoning, truth and soberness may prevail, on which side soever they meet: but in works of imagination novelty has the advantage over prejudice; that which is striking and unheard-of over that which is trite and known before, and that which gives unlimited scope to the indulgence of the feelings and the passions (whether erroneous or not) over that which imposes a restraint upon them.

I have half trifled with this subject; and I believe I have done so because I despaired of finding language for some old rooted feelings I have about it, which a theory could neither give nor can it take away. 'The Robbers' was the first play I ever read: and the effect it produced upon me was the greatest. It stunned me like a blow, and I have not recovered enough from it to describe how it was. There are impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface. Were I to live much longer than I have any chance of doing, the books which I read when I was young I can never forget. Five-and-twenty years have elapsed since I first read the translation of 'The Robbers,' but they have not blotted the impression from my mind: it is here still, an old dweller in the chambers of the brain. The scene in particular in which Moor looks through his tears at the evening sun from the mountain' brow, and says in his despair, "It was my wish like him to live, like him to die: it was an idle thought, a boy's conceit," took fast hold of my imagination, and that sun has to me never set! The last interview in 'Don Carlos' between the two lovers, in which the injured bride struggles to burst the prison-house of her destiny, in which her hopes and youth lie coffined, and buried, as it were, alive, under the oppression of unspeakable anguish, I remember gave me a deep sense of suffering and a strong desire after good, which has haunted me ever since. I do not like Schiller's later style so well. His 'Wallenstein,' which is admirably and almost literally translated by Mr. Coleridge, is stately, thoughtful, and imaginative: but where is the enthusiasm, the throbbing of hope and fear, the mortal struggle between the passions; as if all the happiness or misery of a life were crowded into a moment, and the die was to be cast that instant? Kotzebue's best work I read first in Cumberland's imitation of it in 'The Wheel of Fortune;' and I confess that that style of sentiment which seems to make of life itself a long-drawn endless sigh, has something in it that pleases me, in spite of rules and criticism. Goëthe's tragedies are (those that I have seen of them, his 'Count Egmont,' 'Stella,' &c.) constructed upon the second or inverted manner of the German stage, with a deliberate design to avoid all possible effect and interest, and this object is completely accomplished. He is however spoken of with

enthusiasm almost amounting to idolatry by his countrymen, and those among ourselves who import heavy German criticism into this country in shallow, flat-bottomed unwieldly intellects. Madame de Stael speaks of one passage in his 'Iphigenia,' where he introduces a fragment of an old song, which the Furies are supposed to sing to Tantalus in Hell, reproaching him with the times when he sat with the Gods at their golden tables, and with his after-crimes that hurled him from heaven, at which he turns his eyes from his children and hangs his head in mournful silence. This is the true sublime. Of all his works I like his 'Werter' best, nor would I part with it at a venture, even for the 'Memoirs of Anastasius the Greek,' whoever is the author; nor ever cease to think of the times, "when in the fine summer evenings they saw the frank, noble-minded enthusiast coming up from the valley," nor of "the high grass that by the light of the departing sun waved in the breeze over his grave."

But I have said enough to give an idea of this modern style, compared with our own early Dramatic Literature, of which I had to treat. I have done: and if I have done no better, the fault has been in me, not in the subject. My liking to this grew with my knowledge of it: but so did my anxiety to do it justice. I somehow felt it as a point of honour not to make my hearers think less highly of some of these old writers than I myself did of them. If I have praised an author, it was because I liked him: if I have quoted a passage, it was because it pleased me in the reading: if I have spoken contemptuously of any one, it has been reluctantly. It is no easy task, that a writer, even in so humble a class as myself, takes upon him; he is scouted and ridiculed if he fails; and if he succeeds, the enmity and cavils and malice with which he is assailed, are just in proportion to his success. The coldness and jealousy of his friends not unfrequently keep pace with the rancour of his enemies. They do not like you a bit the better for fulfilling the good opinion they always entertained of you. They would wish you to be always promising a great deal, and doing nothing, that they may answer for the performance. That shows their sagacity, and does not hurt their vanity. An author wastes his time in painful study and obscure researches, to gain a little breath of popularity, meets with nothing

but vexation and disappointment in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred; or when he thinks to grasp the luckless prize, finds it not worth the trouble—the perfume of a minute, fleeting as a shadow, hollow as a sound: "as often got without merit as lost without deserving." He thinks that the attainment of acknowledged excellence will secure him the expression of those feelings in others, which the image and hope of it had excited in his own breast, but instead of that he meets with nothing (or scarcely nothing) but squint-eyed suspicion, idiot wonder, and grinning scorn. It seems hardly worth while to have taken all the pains he has been at for this!

In youth we borrow patience from our future years: the spring of hope gives us courage to act and suffer. A cloud is upon our onward path, and we fancy that all is sunshine beyond it. The prospect seems endless, because we do not know the end of it. We think that life is long, because art is so, and that, because we have much to do, it is well worth doing: or that no exertions can be too great, no sacrifices too painful, to overcome the difficulties we have to encounter. Life is a continued struggle to be what we are not, and to do what we cannot. But as we approach the goal, we draw in the reins; the impulse is less, as we have not so far to go; as we see objects nearer, we become less sanguine in the pursuit: it is not the despair of not attaining, so much as knowing that there is nothing worth obtaining, and the fear of having nothing left even to wish for, that damps our ardour and relaxes our efforts; and if the mechanical habit did not increase the facility, would, I believe, take away all inclination or power to do anything. We stagger on the few remaining paces to the end of our journey; make perhaps one final effort; and are glad when our task is done!

THE END.

CHARACTERS

OF

SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS.

BY WILLIAM HAZLITT.

PHILADELPHIA:
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624, 626 & 628 MARKET STREET.
1876.

TO

CHARLES LAMB, ESQ.,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,

AS A MARK OF OLD FRIENDSHIP AND LASTING ESTEEM,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

BY HAZLITT'S SON.

The following work, of which the first edition was sold in a few days, has been long out of print; the present republication has been undertaken to supply the constant and increasing demand which the rising popularity of the author has generated.

Those to whom the masterly criticisms of William Hazlitt are most familiar—we especially allude to the notices of the English poets, the dramatists of Elizabeth's time, the comic writers, the actors of his own day, and the painters of every age—will gladly hail the appearance of the present volume, as a sign and promise of others yet to come; as come they will, in the form of this, and containing matter certainly not less entitled to preservation in an elegant and convenient shape, should the success of the present venture warrant similar experiments.

Those also (a much larger class of the "reading public") to whom the writings of our vigorous and original author are but partially known, through the medium of stray volumes, or an accidental and cursory glance at his fresh, startling and animated pages, will welcome with no less eagerness what, if encouraged, may prove the commencing volume of a rich and attractive series—an edition of the miscellaneous and scattered writings of this

Patriot, Metaphysician, and Critic. This latter class of seekers is rapidly increasing, as copies of the old editions disappear and the name of their author comes brighter and brighter out of the "foul fog" in which contemporary jealousy and political prejudice hoped effectually to hide its lustre. The minds on which, in spite of every disadvantage, he made a deep impression during his lifetime, were the minds of younger men than himself, and these are now reacting on others more youthful than themselves. Many who are promoting the best interests of the world, in wide or narrow circles, in the press or the lecture-room, the literary association or mechanics' institute, owe much of the immediate spring and impulse of the power which is now so happily producing power, to the force and life of Hazlitt's writings. No author in our language exceeds him in the great art of setting his readers thinking. Where his own thoughts, whether from carelessness or caprice, fall short of the point of truth always aimed at, they nevertheless serve as guides and monitors to the understanding and imagination of the reader. This seems especially the case with the work now submitted to the public. These views of the "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays" remind one of Kean's acting in some of the tragedies here criticized. They are incomplete and faulty in some respects—speculative and doubtful in others; but wonderfully full of thought, and always brilliant in expression. Right or wrong, they cannot be read with indifference; for whatever may have been his faults, Hazlitt never wrote a dull sentence.

PREFACE.

It is observed by Mr. Pope, that "If ever any author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakspeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of nature; it proceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakspeare was inspiration indeed: he is not so much an imitator, as an instrument of nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.

"His *characters* are so much nature herself, that it is a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shows that they have received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image: each picture, like a mock rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakspeare is as much an individual as those in life itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike, and such as, from their relation or affinity in any respect, appear most to be twins, will, upon comparison, be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character, we must add the wonderful preservation of it; which is such throughout his plays, that, had all the speeches been printed without the very names of

the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker."

The object of the volume here offered to the public is to illustrate these remarks in a more particular manner by a reference to each play. A gentleman of the name of Mason, the author of a Treatise on Ornamental Gardening (not Mason the poet), began a work of a similar kind about forty years ago, but he only lived to finish a parallel between the characters of Macbeth and Richard III., which is an exceedingly ingenious piece of analytical criticism. Richardson's Essays include but a few of Shakspeare's principal characters. The only work which seemed to supersede the necessity of an attempt like the present was Schlegel's very admirable Lectures on the Drama, which gave by far the best account of the plays of Shakspeare that have hitherto appeared. The only circumstances in which it was thought not impossible to improve on the manner in which the German critic has executed this part of his design were in avoiding an appearance of mysticism in his style, not very attractive to the English reader, and in bringing illustrations from particular passages of the plays themselves, of which Schlegel's work, from the extensiveness of his plan, did not admit. We will at the same time confess, that some little jealousy of the character of the national understanding was not without its share in producing the following undertaking, for "we were piqued" that it should be reserved for a foreign critic to give "reasons for the faith which we English have in Shakspeare." Certainly, no writer among ourselves has shown either the same enthusiastic admiration of his genius, or the same philosophical acuteness in pointing out his characteristic excellences. As we have pretty well ex-

hausted all we had to say upon this subject in the body of the work, we shall here transcribe Schlegel's general account of Shakspeare, which is in the following words:—

"Never, perhaps, was there so comprehensive a talent for the delineation of character as Shakspeare's. It not only grasps the diversities of rank, sex and age, down to the dawnings of infancy; not only do the king and the beggar, the hero and the pickpocket, the sage and the idiot, speak and act with equal truth; not only does he transport himself to distant ages and foreign nations, and portray in the most accurate manner, with only a few apparent violations of costume, the spirit of the ancient Romans, of the French in their wars with the English, of the English themselves during a great part of their history, of the Southern Europeans (in the serious parts of many comedies), the cultivated society of that time, and the former rude and barbarous state of the North; his human characters have not only such depth and precision that they cannot be arranged under classes, and are inexhaustible, even in conception:—no—this Prometheus not merely forms men, he opens the gates of the magical world of spirits; calls up the midnight ghost; exhibits before us his witches amidst their unhallowed mysteries; peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs: and these beings, existing only in imagination, possess such truth and consistency, that even when deformed monsters like Caliban, he extorts the conviction, that if there should be such beings, they would so conduct themselves. In a word, as he carries with him the most fruitful and daring fancy into the kingdom of nature.—on the other hand, he carries nature into the regions of fancy, lying beyond the confines of reality. We are lost in astonishment at seeing the extraordinary, the

wonderful, and the unheard-*of*, in such intimate nearness. If Shakspeare deserves our admiration for his characters, he is equally deserving of it for his exhibition of passion, taking this word in its widest signification, as including every mental condition, every tone, from indifference or familiar mirth to the wildest rage and despair. He gives us the history of minds; he lays open to us, in a single word, a whole series of preceding conditions. His passions do not at first stand displayed to us in all their height, as is the case with so many tragic poets, who, in the language of Lessing, are thorough masters of the legal style of love. He paints in a most inimitable manner, the gradual progress from the first origin. 'He gives,' as Lessing says, 'a living picture of all the most minute and secret artifices by which a feeling steals into our souls; of all the imperceptible advantages which it there gains: of all the stratagems by which every other passion is made subservient to it, till it becomes the sole tyrant of our desires and aversions.' Of all poets, perhaps, he alone has portrayed the mental diseases—melancholy, delirium, lunacy—with such inexpressible, and, in every respect, definite truth, that the physician may enrich his observations from them in the same manner as from real cases.

"And yet Johnson has objected to Shakspeare, that his pathos is not always natural and free from affectation. There are, it is true, passages, though, comparatively speaking, very few, where his poetry exceeds the bounds of true dialogue, where a too soaring imagination, a too luxuriant wit, rendered the complete dramatic forgetfulness of himself impossible. With this exception, the censure originates only in a fanciless way of thinking, to which everything appears unnatural that does not suit its own

tame insipidity. Hence, an idea has been formed of simple and natural pathos, which consists in exclamations destitute of imagery, and nowise elevated above every-day life. But energetic passions electrify the whole of the mental powers, and will, consequently, in highly favored natures, express themselves in an ingenious and figurative manner. It has been often remarked, that indignation gives wit; and, as despair occasionally breaks out into laughter, it may sometimes also give vent to itself in antithetical comparisons.

"Besides, the rights of the poetical form have not been duly weighed. Shakspeare, who was always sure of his object, to move in a sufficiently powerful manner when he wished to do so, has occasionally, by indulging in a freer play, purposely moderated the impressions when too painful, and immediately introduced a musical alleviation of our sympathy. He has not those rude ideas of his art which many moderns seem to have, as if the poet, like the clown in the proverb, must strike twice on the same place. An ancient rhetorician delivered a caution against dwelling too long on the excitation of pity; for nothing, he said, dries so soon as tears; and Shakspeare acted conformably to this ingenious maxim, without knowing it.

"The objection, that Shakspeare wounds our feelings by the open display of the most disgusting moral odiousness, harrows up the mind unmercifully, and tortures even our senses by the exhibition of the most insupportable and hateful spectacles, is one of much greater importance. He has never, in fact, varnished over wild and blood-thirsty passions with a pleasing exterior,—never clothed crime and want of principle with a false show of greatness of soul; and in that respect he is every way deserving of praise. Twice he has portrayed downright villains; and the mas-

terly way in which he has contrived to elude impressions of too painful a nature, may be seen in Iago and Richard the Third. The constant reference to a petty and puny race must cripple the boldness of the poet. Fortunately for his art, Shakspeare lived in an age extremely susceptible of noble and tender impressions, but which had still enough of the firmness inherited from a vigorous olden time, not to shrink back with dismay from every strong and violent picture. We have lived to see tragedies of which the catastrophe consists in the swoon of an enamored princess. If Shakspeare falls occasionally into the opposite extreme, it is a noble error, originating in the fulness of a gigantic strength: and yet this tragical Titan, who storms the heavens, and threatens to tear the world from off its hinges; who, more terrible than Æschylus, makes our hair stand on end, and congeals our blood with horror, possessed, at the same time, the insinuating loveliness of the sweetest poetry. He plays with love like a child; and his songs are breathed out like melting sighs. He unites in his genius the utmost elevation and the utmost depth; and the most foreign, and even apparently irreconcilable properties subsist in him peaceably together. The world of spirits and nature have laid all their treasures at his feet. In strength a demi-god, in profundity of view a prophet, in all-seeing wisdom a protecting spirit of a higher order, he lowers himself to mortals, as if unconscious of his superiority; and is as open and unassuming as a child.

"Shakspeare's comic talent is equally wonderful with that which he has shown in the pathetic and tragic: it stands on an equal elevation, and possesses equal extent and profundity. All that I before wished was, not to admit that the former preponderated. He is highly inventive in comic

situations and motives. It will be hardly possible to show whence he has taken any of them; whereas, in the serious part of his drama, he has generally laid hold of something already known. His comic characters are equally true, various, and profound, with his serious. So little is he disposed to caricature, that we may rather say many of his traits are almost too nice and delicate for the stage, that they can only be properly seized by a great actor and fully understood by a very acute audience. Not only has he delineated many kinds of folly; he has also contrived to exhibit mere stupidity in a most diverting and entertaining manner." Vol. ii., p. 145.

We have the rather availed ourselves of this testimony of a foreign critic in behalf of Shakspeare, because our own countryman, Dr. Johnson, has not been so favorable to him. It may be said of Shakspeare, that "those who are not for him are against him:" for indifference is here the height of injustice. We may sometimes, in order "to do a great right, do a little wrong." An overstrained enthusiasm is more pardonable with respect to Shakspeare than the want of it; for our admiration cannot easily surpass his genius. We have a high respect for Dr. Johnson's character and understanding, mixed with something like personal attachment: but he was neither a poet nor a judge of poetry. He might in one sense be a judge of poetry as it falls within the limits and rules of prose, but not as it is poetry. Least of all was he qualified to be a judge of Shakspeare, who "alone is high fantastical." Let those who have a prejudice against Johnson read Boswell's Life of him: let those whom he has prejudiced against Shakspeare read *Irene*. We do not say that a man to be a critic must necessarily be a poet: but to be a good critic, he

ought not to be a bad poet. Such poetry as a man deliberately writes, such, and such only will he like. Dr. Johnson's Preface to his edition of Shakspeare looks like a laborious attempt to bury the characteristic merits of his author under a load of cumbrous phraseology, and to weigh his excellences and defects in equal scales, stuffed full of "swelling figures and sonorous epithets." Nor could it well be otherwise; Dr. Johnson's general powers of reasoning overlaid his critical susceptibility. All his ideas were cast in a given mould, in a set form: they were made out by rule and system, by climax, inference, and antithesis: Shakspeare's were the reverse. Johnson's understanding dealt only in round numbers: the fractions were lost upon him. He reduced everything to the common standard of conventional propriety; and the most exquisite refinement or sublimity produced an effect on his mind, only as they could be translated into the language of measured prose. To him an excess of beauty was a fault; for it appeared to him like an excrescence; and his imagination was dazzled by the blaze of light. His writings neither shone with the beams of native genius, nor reflected them. The shifting shapes of fancy, the rainbow hues of things, made no impression on him: he seized only on the permanent and tangible. He had no idea of natural objects but "such as he could measure with a two-foot rule, or tell upon ten fingers:" he judged of human nature in the same way, by mood and figure: he saw only the definite, the positive, and the practical; the average forms of things, not their striking differences; their classes, not their degrees. He was a man of strong common sense and practical wisdom, rather than of genius and feeling. He retained the regular, habitual impressions of actual objects, but he could not follow

the rapid flights of fancy, or the strong movements of passion. That is, he was to the poet what the painter of still life is to the painter of history. Common sense sympathizes with the impressions of things on ordinary minds in ordinary circumstances: genius catches the glancing combinations presented to the eye of fancy, under the influence of passion. It is the province of the didactic reasoner to take cognizance of those results of human nature which are constantly repeated and always the same, which follow one another in regular succession, which are acted upon by large classes of men, and embodied in received customs, laws, language, and institutions; and it was in arranging, comparing, and arguing on these kinds of general results, that Johnson's excellence lay. But he could not quit his hold of the common-place and mechanical, and apply the general rule to the particular exception, or show how the nature of man was modified by the workings of passion, or the infinite fluctuations of thought and accident. Hence he could judge neither of the heights nor depths of poetry. Nor is this all; for being conscious of great powers in himself, and those powers of an adverse tendency to those of his author, he would be for setting up a foreign jurisdiction over poetry, and making criticism a kind of Procrustes' bed of genius, where he might cut down imagination to matter of fact, regulate the passions according to reason, and translate the whole into logical diagrams and rhetorical declamation. Thus he says of Shakspeare's characters, in contradiction to what Pope had observed, and to what every one else feels, that each character is a species instead of being an individual. He in fact found the general species or *didactic* form in Shakspeare's characters, which was all he sought or cared for; he did not find the

individual traits. or the *dramatic* distinctions which Shakspeare has engrafted on this general nature, because he felt no interest in them. Shakspeare's bold and happy flights of imagination were equally thrown away upon our author. He was not only without any particular fineness of organic sensibility, alive to all the "mighty world of ear and eye," which is necessary to the painter or musician, but without that intenseness of passion which, seeking to exaggerate whatever excites the feelings of pleasure or power in the mind, and moulding the impressions of natural objects according to the impulses of imagination, produces a genius and a taste for poetry. According to Dr. Johnson, a mountain is sublime, or a rose is beautiful; for that their name and definition imply. But he would no more be able to give the description of Dover cliff in *Lear*, or the description of flowers in *The Winter's Tale*, than to describe the objects of a sixth sense; nor do we think he would have any very profound feeling of the beauty of the passages here referred to. A stately common-place, such as Congreve's description of a ruin in *The Mourning Bride*, would have answered Johnson's purpose just as well, or better than the first; and an indiscriminate profusion of scents and hues would have interfered less with the ordinary routine of his imagination than Perdita's lines, which seem enamored of their own sweetness—

> ——— "Daffodils
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath."

No one who does not feel the passion which these objects inspire can go along with the imagination which seeks to

express that passion and the uneasy sense of delight by something still more beautiful, and no one can feel this passionate love of nature without quick natural sensibility. To a mere literal and formal apprehension, the inimitably characteristic epithet "violets *dim*," must seem to imply a defect, rather than a beauty; and to any one, not feeling the full force of that epithet, which suggests an image like 'the sleepy eye of love," the allusion to "the lids of Juno's eyes" must appear extravagant and unmeaning. Shakspeare's fancy lent words and images to the most refined sensibility to nature, struggling for expression: his descriptions are identical with the things themselves, seen through the fine medium of passion: strip them of that connexion, and try them by ordinary conceptions and ordinary rules, and they are as grotesque and barbarous as you please. By thus lowering Shakspeare's genius to the standard of common-place invention, it was easy to show that his faults were as great as his beauties: for the excellence, which consists merely in a conformity to rules, is counterbalanced by the technical violation of them. Another circumstance which led to Dr. Johnson's indiscriminate praise or censure of Shakspeare, is the very structure of his style. Johnson wrote a kind of rhyming prose, in which he was compelled as much to finish the different clauses of his sentences, and to balance one period against another, as the writer of heroic verse is to keep to lines of ten syllables with similar terminations. He no sooner acknowledges the merits of his author in one line than the periodical revolution of his style carries the weight of his opinion completely over to the side of objection, thus keeping up a perpetual alternation of perfections and absurdities. We do not otherwise know how to account for such assertions as the following:

"In his tragic scenes, there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy, for the greater part, by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct." Yet after saying that "his tragedy was skill," he affirms in the next page, "His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, *for his power was the power of nature:* when he endeavored, like other tragic writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader." Poor Shakspeare! Between the charges here brought against him, of want of nature in the first instance, and of want of skill in the second, he could hardly escape being condemned. And again, "But the admirers of this great poet have most reason to complain when he approaches nearest to his highest excellence, and seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection, or mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. What he does best, he soon ceases to do. He no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity." In all this, our critic seems more bent on maintaining the equilibrium of his style than the consistency or truth of his opinions. If Dr. Johnson's opinion was right, the following observations on Shakspeare's Plays must be greatly exaggerated, if not ridiculous. If he was wrong, what has been said may perhaps account for his being so, without detracting from his ability and judgment in other things.

April 5, 1818

CYMBELINE.

CYMBELINE is one of the most delightful of Shakspeare's historical plays. It may be considered as a dramatic romance, in which the most striking parts of the story are thrown into the form of a dialogue, and the intermediate circumstances are explained by the different speakers, as occasion renders it necessary. The action is less concentrated in consequence; but the interest becomes more aerial and refined from the principle of perspective introduced into the subject by the imaginary changes of scene as well as by the length of time it occupies. The reading of this play is like going a journey with some uncertain object at the end of it, and in which the suspense is kept up and heightened by the long intervals between each action. Though the events are scattered over such an extent of surface, and relate to such a variety of characters, yet the links which bind the different interests of the story together are never entirely broken. The most straggling and seemingly casual incidents are contrived in such a manner as to lead at last to the most complete development of the catastrophe. The ease and conscious unconcern with which this is effected only makes the skill more wonderful. The business of the plot evidently thickens in the last act: the story moves forward with increasing rapidity at every step; its various ramifications are drawn from the most distant points to the same centre; the principal characters are brought together, and placed in very critical situations; and the fate of almost every person in the drama is made to depend on the solution of a single circumstance—the answer of Iachimo to the question of Imogen respecting the obtaining of the ring from Posthumus. Dr. Johnson is of opinion that Shakspeare was generally inatten-

tive to the winding up of his plots. We think the contrary is true; and we might cite in proof of this remark not only the present play, but the conclusion of *Lear*, of *Romeo and Juliet*, of *Macbeth*, of *Othello*, even of *Hamlet*, and of other plays of less moment, in which the last act is crowded with decisive events brought about by natural and striking means.

The pathos in CYMBELINE is not violent or tragical, but of the most pleasing and amiable kind. A certain tender gloom overspreads the whole. Posthumus is the ostensible hero of the piece, but its greatest charm is the character of Imogen. Posthumus is only interesting from the interest she takes in him, and she is only interesting herself from her tenderness and constancy to her husband. It is the peculiar characteristic of Shakspeare's heroines that they seem to exist only in their attachment to others. They are pure abstractions of the affections. We think as little of their persons as they do themselves, because we are let into the secrets of their hearts, which are more important. We are too much interested in their affairs to stop to look at their faces, except by stealth and at intervals. No one ever hit the true perfection of the female character, the sense of weakness leaning on the strength of its affections for support, so well as Shakspeare —no one ever so well painted natural tenderness free from affectation and disguise—no one else ever so well showed how delicacy and timidity, when driven to extremity, grow romantic and extravagant; for the romance of his heroines (in which they abound) is only an excess of the habitual prejudices of their sex, scrupulous of being false to their vows, truant to the affections, and taught by the force of feeling when to forego the forms of propriety for the essence of it. His women are in this respect exquisite logicians; for there is nothing so logical as passion. They know their own minds exactly; and only follow up a favorite idea which they have sworn to with their tongues, and which is engraven on their hearts, into its untoward consequences. They are the prettiest little set of martyrs and confessors on record.—Cibber, in speaking of the early English stage, accounts for the want of prominence and theatrical display in Shakspeare's female characters from the circumstance, that women in those days were not allowed to play the parts of women,

which made it necessary to keep these a good deal in the background. Does not this state of manners itself, which prevented their exhibiting themselves in public, and confined them to the relations and charities of domestic life, afford a truer explanation of the matter? His women are certainly very unlike stage-heroines; the reverse of tragedy-queens.

We have almost as great an affection for Imogen as she had for Posthumus; and she deserves it better. Of all Shakspeare's women she is perhaps the most tender and the most artless. Her incredulity in the opening scene with Iachimo, as to her husband's infidelity, is much the same as Desdemona's backwardness to believe Othello's jealousy. Her answer to the most distressing part of the picture is only, "My lord, I fear, has forgot Britain." Her readiness to pardon Iachimo's false imputations and his designs against herself, is a good lesson to prudes; and may show that where there is a real attachment to virtue, it has no need to bolster itself up with an outrageous or affected antipathy to vice. The scene in which Pisanio gives Imogen his master's letter, accusing her of incontinency on the treacherous suggestions of Iachimo, is as touching as it is possible for anything to be:—

"PISANIO. What cheer, Madam?
IMOGEN. False to his bed! What is it to be false?
To lie in watch there, and to think on him?
To weep 'twixt clock and clock? If sleep charge nature
To break it with a fearful dream of him,
And cry myself awake? That's false to 's bed, is it?
PISANIO. Alas, good lady!
IMOGEN. I false? thy conscience witness, Iachimo,
Thou didst accuse him of incontinency,
Thou then look'dst like a villain: now methinks,
Thy favor's good enough. Some jay of Italy,
Whose mother was her painting, hath betrayed him.
Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion,
And for I am richer than to hang by th' walls,
I must be ript; to pieces with me. Oh,
Men's vows are women's traitors. All good seeming
By thy revolt, oh husband, shall be thought
Put on for villainy: not born where 't grows,
But worn a bait for ladies.
PISANIO. Good Madam, hear me—
IMOGEN. Talk thy tongue weary, speak:

I have heard I am a strumpet, and mine ear,
Therein false struck, can take no greater wound,
Nor tent to bottom that."———

When Pisanio, who had been charged to kill his mistress, puts her in a way to live, she says,

"Why, good fellow,
What shall I do the while? Where bide? How live:
Or in my life what comfort, when I am
Dead to my husband?"

Yet when he advises her to disguise herself in boy's clothes, and suggests "a course pretty and full in view," by which she may "happily be near the residence of Posthumus," she exclaims,

"Oh, for such means,
Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,
I would adventure."

And when Pisanio, enlarging on the consequences, tells her she must change

——— "Fear and niceness,
The handmaids of all women, or more truly,
Woman its pretty self, into a waggish courage,
Ready in gibes, quick answer'd, saucy, and
As quarrellous as the weazel"———

she interrupts him hastily;

"Nay, be brief;
I see into thy end, and am almost
A man already."

In her journey thus disguised to Milford-Haven, she loses her guide and her way; and unbosoming her complaints, says beautifully,—

——— "My dear Lord,
Thou art one of the false ones; now I think on thee,
My hunger's gone; but even before, I was
At point to sink for food."

She afterwards finds, as she thinks, the dead body of Posthumus, and engages herself as a footboy to serve a Roman officer, when she has done all due obsequies to him whom she calls her former master—

> ———" And when
> With wild wood-leaves and weeds, I ha' strew'd his grave,
> And on it said a century of pray'rs,
> Such as I can, twice o'er I'll weep and sigh,
> And leaving so his service, follow you,
> So please you entertain me."

Now this is the very religion of love. She all along relies little on her personal charms, which she fears may have been eclipsed by some painted jay of Italy ; she relies on her merit, and her merit is in the depth of her love, her truth and constancy. Our admiration of her beauty is excited with as little consciousness as possible on her part. There are two delicious descriptions given of her, one when she is asleep, and one when she is supposed dead. Arviragus thus addresses her—

> ———" With fairest flowers,
> While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
> I'll sweeten thy sad grave ; thou shalt not lack
> The flow'r that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor
> The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins, no, nor
> The leaf of eglantine, which, not to slander,
> Out-sweeten'd not thy breath."

The yellow Iachimo gives another, thus, when he steals into her bed-chamber :—

> ———' Cytherea,
> How bravely thou becom'st thy bed ! Fresh lily,
> And whiter than the sheets ! That I might touch—
> But kiss one kiss—'Tis her breathing that
> Perfumes the chamber thus : the flame o' th' taper
> Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids
> To see th' enclosed lights now canopied
> Under the windows, white and azure, laced
> With blue of Heav'n's own tint—on her left breast
> A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
> I' the bottom of a cowslip."

There is a moral sense in the proud beauty of this last image, a rich surfeit of the fancy,—as that well-known passage beginning, "Me of my lawful pleasure she restrained, and prayed me oft forbearance," sets a keener edge upon it by the inimitable picture of modesty and self-denial.

The character of Cloten, the conceited, booby lord, and rejected lover of Imogen, though not very agreeable in itself, and at present obsolete, is drawn with great humor and knowledge of character. The description which Imogen gives of his unwelcome addresses to her—"Whose love-suit hath been to me as fearful as a siege"—is enough to cure the most ridiculous lover of his folly. It is remarkable, that though Cloten makes so poor a figure in love, he is described as assuming an air of consequence as the Queen's son in a council of state, and with all the absurdity of his person and manners, is not without shrewdness in his observations. So true is it that folly is as often owing to a want of proper sentiments as to a want of understanding! The exclamation of the ancient critic, Oh Menander and Nature, which of you copied from the other! would not be misapplied to Shakspeare.

The other characters in this play are represented with great truth and accuracy, and as it happens in most of the author's works, there is not only the utmost keeping in each separate character; but in the casting of the different parts, and their relation to one another, there is an affinity and harmony, like what we may observe in the gradations of color in a picture. The striking and powerful contrasts in which Shakspeare abounds could not escape observation; but the use he makes of the principle of analogy to reconcile the greatest diversities of character, and to maintain a continuity of feeling throughout, has not been sufficiently attended to. In CYMBELINE, for instance, the principal interest arises out of the unalterable fidelity of Imogen to her husband under the most trying circumstances. Now the other parts of the picture are filled up with subordinate examples of the same feeling, variously modified by different situations, and applied to the purposes of virtue or vice. The plot is aided by the amorous importunities of Cloten, by the tragical determination of Iachimo to conceal the defeat of his

project by a daring imposture: the faithful attachment of Pisanio to his mistress is an affecting accompaniment to the whole; the obstinate adherence to his purpose in Bellarius, who keeps the fate of the young princes so long a secret, in resentment for the ungrateful return to his former services; the incorrigible wickedness of the Queen, and even the blind uxorious confidence of Cymbeline, are all so many lines of the same story, tending to the same point. The effect of this coincidence is rather felt than observed; and as the impression exists unconsciously in the mind of the reader, so it probably arose in the same manner in the mind of the author, not from design, but from the force of natural association, a particular train of feeling suggesting different inflections of the same predominant principle, melting into, and strengthening one another, like chords in music.

The characters of Bellarius, Guiderius, and Arviragus, and the romantic scenes in which they appear, are a fine relief to the intrigues and artificial refinements of the court from which they are banished. Nothing can surpass the wildness and simplicity of the descriptions of the mountain-life they lead. They follow the business of huntsmen, not of shepherds; and this is in keeping with the spirit of adventure and uncertainty in the rest of the story, and with the scenes in which they are afterwards called on to act. How admirably the youthful fire and impatience to emerge from their obscurity in the young princes is opposed to the cooler calculations and prudent resignation of their more experienced counsellor! How well the disadvantages of knowledge and of ignorance, of solitude and society, are placed against each other!

"GUIDERIUS. Out of your proof you speak: we poor unfledg'd
Have never wing'd from view o' th' nest; nor know not
What air's from home. Haply this life is best,
If quiet life is best; sweeter to you
That have a sharper known; well corresponding
With your stiff age; but unto us it is
A cell of ignorance; travelling a-bed,
A prison for a debtor, that not dares
To stride a limit.
ARVIRAGUS. What should we speak of
When we are old as you? When we shall hear

The rain and wind beat dark December? How,
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse
The freezing hours away? We have seen nothing.
We are beastly; subtle as the fox for prey,
Like warlike as the wolf for what we eat:
Our valor is to chase what flies; our cage
We make a quire, as doth the prison'd bird,
And sing our bondage freely."

The answer of Bellarius to this expostulation is hardly satisfactory; for nothing can be an answer to hope, or the passion of the mind for unknown good, but experience.—The forest of Arden, in *As you like it*, can alone compare with the mountain scenes in CYMBELINE: yet how different the contemplative quiet of the one from the enterprising boldness and precarious mode of subsistence in the other! Shakspeare not only lets us into the minds of his characters, but gives a tone and color to the scenes he describes from the feelings of their imaginary inhabitants. He at the same time preserves the utmost propriety of action and passion, and gives all their local accompaniments. If he was equal to the greatest things, he was not above an attention to the smallest. Thus the gallant sportsmen in CYMBELINE have to encounter the abrupt declivities of hill and valley: Touchstone and Audrey jog along a level path. The deer in CYMBELINE are only regarded as objects of prey, "The game's a-foot," &c.,—with Jaques they are fine subjects to moralize upon at leisure, "under the shade of melancholy boughs."

We cannot take leave of this play, which is a favorite with us, without noticing some occasional touches of natural piety and morality. We may allude here to the opening of the scene in which Bellarius instructs the young princes to pay their orisons to heaven:—

——"See boys! this gate
Instructs you how t' adore the Heav'ns; and bows yo'
To morning's holy office.
GUIDERIUS. Hail, Heaven!
ARVIRAGUS. Hail, Heaven!
BELLARIUS. Now for our mountain-sport, up to yon hill"

What a grace and unaffected spirit of piety breathes in this passage! In like manner, one of the brothers says to the other, when about to perform the funeral rites to Fidele,

> "Nay, Cadwall, we must lay his head to the east;
> My father hath a reason for't."

Shakspeare's morality is introduced in the same simple, unobtrusive manner. Imogen will not let her companions stay away from the chase to attend her when sick, and gives her reason for it—

> "Stick to your journal course; *the breach of custom*
> *Is breach of all!*"

When the Queen attempts to disguise her motives for procuring the poison from Cornelius, by saying she means to try its effect on "creatures not worth the hanging," his answer conveys at once a tacit reproof of her hypocrisy and a useful lesson of humanity—

> ——— "Your Highness
> Shall from this practice but make hard your heart."

MACBETH.

MACBETH and *Lear*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*, are usually reckoned Shakspeare's four principal tragedies. *Lear* stands first for the profound intensity of the passion; *Macbeth* for the wildness of the imagination and the rapidity of the action; *Othello* for the progressive interest and powerful alternations of feeling; *Hamlet* for the refined development of thought and sentiment. If the force of genius shown in each of these works is astonishing, their variety is not less so. They are like different creations of the same mind, not one of which has the slightest reference to the rest. This distinctness and originality is indeed the necessary consequence of truth and nature. Shakspeare's genius alone appeared to possess the resources of nature. He is "your only *tragedy-maker*." His plays have the force of things upon the mind. What he represents is brought home to the bosom as a part of our experience, implanted in the memory as if we had known the places, persons, and things of which he treats. MACBETH is like a record of a preternatural and tragical event. It has the rugged severity of an old chronicle, with all that the imagination of the poet can engraft upon traditional belief. The castle of Macbeth, round which "the air smells wooingly" and where "the temple-haunting martlet builds," has a real subsistence in the mind; the Weird Sisters meet us in person on "the blasted heath;" the "air-drawn dagger" moves slowly before our eyes; the "gracious Duncan," the "blood-boltered Banquo" stand before us; all that passed through the mind of Macbeth passes, without the loss of a tittle, through our's. All that could actually take place, and all that is only possible to be conceived, what was said and what was done, the workings of passion, the spells of magic, are brought before us with the same

absolute truth and vividness. Shakspeare excelled in the openings of his plays; that of MACBETH is the most striking of any. The wildness of the scenery, the sudden shifting of the situations and characters, the bustle, the expectations excited, are equally extraordinary. From the first entrance of the Witches and the description of them when they meet Macbeth,

> ——— "What are these
> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like the inhabitants of th' earth
> And yet are on't?"

the mind is prepared for all that follows.

This tragedy is alike distinguished for the lofty imagination it displays, and for the tumultuous vehemence of the action; and the one is made the moving principle of the other. The overwhelming pressure of preternatural agency urges on the tide of human passion with redoubled force. Macbeth himself appears driven along by the violence of his fate like a vessel drifting before a storm; he reels to and fro like a drunken man; he staggers under the weight of his own purposes and the suggestions of others; he stands at bay with his own situation; and from the superstitious awe and breathless suspense into which the communications of the Weird Sisters throw him, is hurried on with daring impatience to verify their predictions, and with impious and bloody hand to tear aside the veil which hides the uncertainty of the future. He is not equal to the struggle with fate and conscience. He now "bends up each corporal instrument to the terrible feat;" at other times his heart misgives him, and he is cowed and abashed by his success. "The deed, no less than the attempt, confounds him." His mind is assailed by the stings of remorse, and full of "preternatural solicitings." His speeches and soliloquies are dark riddles on human life, baffling solution, and entangling him in their labyrinths. In thought he is absent and perplexed, sudden and desperate in act, from a distrust of his own resolution. His energy springs from the anxiety and agitation of his mind. His blindly rushing forward on the objects of his ambition and revenge, or his recoiling from them, equally betrays the harassed state of his feelings

This part of his character is admirably set off by being brought in connection with that of Lady Macbeth, whose obdurate strength of will and masculine firmness give her the ascendency over her husband's faltering virtue. She at once seizes on the opportunity that offers for the accomplishment of their wished-for greatness, and never flinches from her object till all is over. The magnitude of her resolution almost covers the magnitude of her guilt. She is a great bad woman, whom we hate, but whom we fear more than we hate. She does not excite our loathing and abhorrence like Regan and Goneril. She is only wicked to gain a great end; and is perhaps more distinguished by her commanding presence of mind and inexorable self-will, which do not suffer her to be diverted from a bad purpose, when once formed, by weak and womanly regrets, than by the hardness of her heart or want of natural affections. The impression which her lofty determination of character makes on the mind of Macbeth is well described where he exclaims,

> ——— "Bring forth men children only;
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males!"

Nor do the pains she is at to "screw his courage to the sticking-place," the reproach to him, not to be "lost so poorly in himself," the assurance that "a little water clears them of this deed," show anything but her greater consistency in wickedness. Her strong-nerved ambition furnishes ribs of steel to "the sides of his intent;" and she is herself wound up to the execution of her baneful project with the same unshrinking fortitude in crime, that in other circumstances she would probably have shown patience in suffering. The deliberate sacrifice of all other considerations to the gaining "for their future days and nights sole sovereign sway and masterdom," by the murder of Duncan, is gorgeously expressed in her invocation on hearing of "his fatal entrance under her battlements:"—

> ——— "Come all you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here:
> And fill me, from the crown to th' toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,

Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murthering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night!
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, hold, hold!"—

When she first hears that "Duncan comes there to sleep" she is so overcome by the news, which is beyond her utmost expectations, that she answers the messenger, "Thou'rt mad to say it:" and on receiving her husband's account of the predictions of the Witches, conscious of his instability of purpose, and that her presence is necessary to goad him on to the consummation of his promised greatness, she exclaims—

——— "Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valor of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned withal."

This swelling exultation and keen spirit of triumph, this uncontrollable eagerness of anticipation, which seems to dilate her form and take possession of all her faculties, this solid, substantial flesh and blood display of passion, exhibit a striking contrast to the cold, abstracted, gratuitous, servile malignity of the Witches, who are equally instrumental in urging Macbeth to his fate for the mere love of mischief, and from a disinterested delight in deformity and cruelty. They are hags of mischief, obscene panders to iniquity, malicious from their impotence of enjoyment, enamored of destruction, because they are themselves unreal, abortive, half-existences, and become sublime from their exemption from all human sympathies and contempt for all human affairs, as Lady Macbeth does by the force of passion! Her fault seems to have been an excess of that strong principle of self-interest and family aggrandizement, not amenable to the

common feelings of compassion and justice, which is so marked a feature in barbarous nations and times. A passing reflection of this kind, on the resemblance of the sleeping king to her father, alone prevents her from slaying Duncan with her own hand.

In speaking of the character of Lady Macbeth, we ought not to pass over Mrs. Siddons's manner of acting that part. We can conceive of nothing grander. It was something above nature. It seemed almost as if a being of a superior order had dropped from a higher sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified. In coming on in the sleeping scene, her eyes were open, but their sense was shut. She was like a person bewildered and unconscious of what she did. Her lips moved involuntarily—all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical. She glided on and off the stage like an apparition. To have seen her in that character was an event in every one's life, not to be forgotten.

The dramatic beauty of the character of Duncan, which excites the respect and pity even of his murderers, has been often pointed out. It forms a picture of itself. An instance of the author's power of giving a striking effect to a common reflection, by the manner of introducing it, occurs in a speech of Duncan, complaining of his having been deceived in his opinion of the Thane of Cawdor, at the very moment that he is expressing the most unbounded confidence in the loyalty and service of Macbeth.

> "There is no art
> To find the mind's construction in the face:
> He was a gentleman, on whom I built
> An absolute trust.
> O worthiest cousin, (*addressing himself to Macbeth*)
> The sin of my ingratitude e'en now
> Was great upon me," &c.

Another passage to show that Shakspeare lost sight of nothing that could in any way give relief or heightening to his subject, is the conversation which takes place between Banquo and Fleance immediately before the murder of Duncan.

"BANQUO. How goes the night, boy?
FLEANCE. The moon is down: I have not heard the clock.
BANQUO. And she goes down at twelve.
FLEANCE. I take 't, 'tis later, Sir.
BANQUO. Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heav'n,
Their candles are all out.—
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep; Merciful Powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose."

In like manner, a fine idea is given of the gloomy coming on of evening, just as Banquo is going to be assassinated.

"Light thickens and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood."
* * * * * *
"Now spurs the 'lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn."

MACBETH (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakspeare's plays. It moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate, and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other. There is nothing but what has a violent end or a violent beginning. The lights and shades are laid on with a determined hand; the transitions from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death, are sudden and startling; every passion brings in its fellow-contrary, and the thoughts pitch and jostle against each other as in the dark. The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakspeare's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. This circumstance will account for the abruptness and violent antitheses of the style, the throes and labor which run through the expression, and from defects will turn them into beauties. "So fair and foul a day, I have not seen," &c. "Such welcome and unwelcome news together." "Men's lives are like the flowers in their caps, dying or ere

they sicken." "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it." The scene before the castle-gate follows the appearance of the Witches on the heath, and is followed by a midnight murder. Duncan is cut off betimes by treason leagued with witchcraft, and Macduff is ripped untimely from his mother's womb to avenge his death. Macbeth, after the death of Banquo, wishes for his presence in extravagant terms. "To him and all we thirst," and when his ghost appears, cries out, "Avaunt and quit my sight," and being gone, he is "himself again." Macbeth resolves to get rid of Macduff, that "he may sleep in spite of thunder;" and cheers his wife on the doubtful intelligence of Banquo's taking off with the encouragement—"Then be thou jocund: ere the bat has flown his cloistered flight; ere to black Hecate's summons the shard-born beetle has rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done—a deed of dreadful note." In Lady Macbeth's speech, "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done 't," there is murder and filial piety together; and in urging him to fulfil his vengeance against the defenceless king, her thoughts spare the blood neither of infants nor old age. The description of the Witches is full of the same contradictory principle; they "rejoice when good kings bleed," "they are neither of the earth nor the air, but both; they should be women, but their beards forbid it;" they take all the pains possible to lead Macbeth on to the height of his ambition, only to betray him in deeper consequence, and after showing him all the pomp of their art, discover their malignant delight in his disappointed hopes, by that bitter taunt, "Why stands Macbeth thus amazedly?" We might multiply such instances everywhere.

The leading features in the character of Macbeth are striking enough, and they form what may be thought at first only a bold rude, Gothic outline. By comparing it with other characters of the same author we shall perceive the absolute truth and identity which is observed in the midst of the giddy whirl and rapid career of events. Macbeth in Shakspeare no more loses his identity of character in the fluctuations of fortune or the storm of passion, than Macbeth in himself would have lost the identity of his person. The genius of Shakspeare was as much

shown in the subtlety and nice discrimination, as in the force and variety of his characters. This distinction is not preserved more completely in those which are the most opposite, than in those which in their general features and obvious appearance most nearly resemble each other. It has been observed, with very little exaggeration, that not one of his speeches could be put into the mouth of any other character than the one to which it is given, and that the transposition, if attempted, might be always detected from some other circumstance in the passage itself. If *to invent according to nature* be the true definition of genius, Shakspeare had more of this quality than any other writer. He might be said to have been a joint worker with nature, and to have created an imaginary world of his own, which has all the appearance and the truth of reality. His mind, while it exerted an absolute control over the stronger workings of the passions, was exquisitely alive to the slightest impulses and most evanescent shades of character and feeling. The broad distinctions and governing principles of human nature are presented, not in the abstract, but in their immediate and endless applications to different persons and things. The local details, the particular accidents, have the fidelity of history without losing anything of their general effect.

It is the business of poetry, and indeed of all works of imagination, to exhibit the species through the individual. Otherwise, there can be no opportunity for the exercise of the imagination, without which the descriptions of the painter or the poet are lifeless, unsubstantial, and vapid. If some modern critics are right with their sweeping generalities and vague abstractions, Shakspeare was quite wrong. In the French dramatists only the class is represented, never the individual: their kings, their heroes, and their lovers are all the same, and they are all French, that is, they are nothing but the mouth-pieces of certain rhetorical, commonplace sentiments on the favorite topics of morality and the passions. The characters in Shakspeare do not declaim like pedantic school-boys, but speak and act like men, placed in real circumstances, with real hearts of flesh and blood beating in their bosoms. No two of his characters are the same, more than they would be so in nature. Those

that are the most alike are distinguished by positive differences, which accompany and modify the leading principle of the character through its most obscure ramifications, embodying the habits, gestures, and almost the looks of the individual. These touches of nature are often so many, and so minute, that the poet cannot be supposed to have been distinctly aware of the operation of the springs by which his imagination was set at work: yet every one of the results is brought out with a truth and clearness, as if his whole study had been directed to that peculiar trait of character or subordinate train of feeling.

Thus MACBETH and *Richard III.*, *King Henry VI.* and *Richard II.*—characters that, in their general description, and in common hands, and indeed in the hands of any other poet, would be merely repetitions of the same general idea, more or less exaggerated—are distinguished by traits as precise, though of course less violent, than those which separate MACBETH from *Henry VI.*, or *Richard III.* from *Richard II.* Shakspeare has with wonderful accuracy, and without the smallest appearance of effort, varied the portraits of imbecility and effeminacy in the two deposed monarchs. With still more powerful and masterly strokes he has marked the different effects of ambition and cruelty, operating on different dispositions and in different circumstances, in his MACBETH and *Richard III.* Both are tyrants, usurpers, murderers, both violent and ambitious, both courageous, cruel, treacherous. But Richard is cruel from nature and constitution. Macbeth becomes so from accidental circumstances. Richard is from his birth deformed in body and mind, and naturally incapable of good. Macbeth is full of "the milk of human kindness," is frank, sociable, generous. He is urged to the commission of guilt by golden opportunity, by the instigations of his wife, and by prophetic warnings. "Fate and metaphysical aid" conspire against his virtue and his loyalty. Richard on the contrary needs no prompter, but wades through a series of crimes to the height of his ambition, from the ungovernable violence of his passions and a restless love of mischief. He is never gay but in the prospect, or in the success of his villanies; Macbeth is full of horror at the thoughts of the murder of Duncan, which he is with difficulty prevailed

on to commit, and of remorse after its perpetration. Richard has no mixture of common humanity in his composition, no regard to kindred or posterity, he owns no fellowship with others, but is "himself alone." Macbeth is not without feelings of sympathy, is accessible to pity, is even in some measure the dupe of his uxoriousness, ranks the loss of friends, of the love of his followers, and of his good name, among the causes which have made him weary of life, and regrets that he has ever seized the crown by unjust means, since he cannot transmit it to his posterity—

> "For Banquo's issue have I 'fil'd my mind—
> For them the gracious Duncan have I murther'd,
> To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings."

In the agitation of his thoughts, he envies those whom he has sent to peace. 'Duncan is in his grave; after life's fitful fever he sleeps well." It is true, he becomes more callous as he plunges deeper in guilt, "direness is thus made familiar to his slaughterous thoughts," and he in the end anticipates his wife in the boldness and bloodiness of his enterprises, while she, for want of the same stimulus of action, is "troubled with thick-coming fancies," walks in her sleep, goes mad and dies. Macbeth endeavors to escape from reflection on his crimes by repelling their consequences, and banishes remorse for the past by the meditation of future mischief. This is not the principle of Richard's cruelty, which resembles the cold malignity, the wanton malice, of a fiend rather than the frailty of human nature. Macbeth is goaded on to acts of violence and retaliation by necessity; to Richard, blood is a pastime. There are other essential differences. Richard is a man of the world, a vulgar, plotting, hardened villain, wholly regardless of everything but his own ends, and the means to accomplish them. Not so Macbeth. The superstitions of the age, the rude state of society, the local scenery and customs, all give a wildness and imaginary grandeur to his character. From the strangeness of the events that surround him, he is full of amazement and fear; and stands in doubt between the world of reality and the world of

fancy. He sees sights not shown to mortal eye, and hears unearthly music. All is tumult and disorder within and without his mind; his purposes recoil upon himself, are broken and disjointed; he is the double thrall of his passions and his evil destiny. He treads upon the brink of fate and grows dizzy with his situation. Richard is not a character either of imagination or pathos, but of pure will. There is no conflict of opposite feelings in his breast. The apparitions which he sees only haunt him in his sleep; nor does he live like Macbeth in a waking dream. There is nothing tight or compact in Macbeth, no tenseness of fibre, nor pointed decision of manner. He has indeed considerable energy and manliness of soul; but then he is "subject to all the skyey influences." He is sure of nothing. All is left at issue. He runs a tilt with fortune, and is baffled with preternatural riddles. The agitation of his mind resembles the rolling of the sea in a storm, or he is like a lion in the toils—fierce, impetuous, and ungovernable. Richard, in the busy turbulence of his projects, never loses his self-possession, and makes use of every circumstance that occurs as an instrument of his long-reaching designs. In his last extremity we can only regard him as a captured wild beast, but we never entirely lose our concern for Macbeth, and he calls back all our sympathy by that fine close of thoughtful melancholy—

> "My way of life is fallen into the sear,
> The yellow leaf; and that which should accompany old age,
> As honor, troops of friends, I must not look to have;
> But in their stead, curses not loud but deep,
> Mouth-honor, breath, which the poor heart
> Would fain deny, and dare not."

We can conceive a common actor to play Richard tolerably well; we can conceive no one to play Macbeth properly, or to look like a man who had encountered the Weird Sisters. All the actors that we have seen, appear as if they had encountered them on the boards of Covent Garden or Drury Lane, but not on the heath at Foris, and as if they did not believe what they had seen. The Witches of MACBETH, indeed, are ridiculous on the modern stage, and we doubt if the Furies of Æschylus would

be more respected. The progress of manners and knowledge has an influence on the stage, and will in time perhaps destroy both tragedy and comedy. Filch's picking pockets in the *Beggar's Opera* is not so good a jest as it used to be; by the force of the police and of philosophy, Lillo's murders and the ghosts in Shakspeare will become obsolete. At last, there will be nothing left, good nor bad, to be desired or dreaded, on the theatre or in real life. The question which has been started with respect to the originality of Shakspeare's Witches, has been well answered by Mr. Lamb in his notes to the "Specimens of Early Dramatic Poetry."

"Though some resemblance may be traced between the charms in Macbeth, and the incantations in this play (the Witch of Middleton), which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakspeare. His Witches are distinguished from the Witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These Witches can hurt the body; those have power over the soul. Hecate in Middleton has a son, a low buffoon; the hags of Shakspeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them. Except Hecate, they have no names, which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties which Middleton has given to his hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth. But, in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They raise fears, jealousies, strifes, *like a thick scurf o'er life*."

JULIUS CÆSAR.

Julius Cæsar was one of three principal plays by different authors, pitched upon by the celebrated Earl of Halifax to be brought out, in a splendid manner, by subscription, in the year 1707. The other two were the *King and no King* of Fletcher, and Dryden's *Maiden Queen*. There perhaps might be political reasons for this selection, as far as regards our author. Otherwise Shakspeare's Julius Cæsar is not equal, as a whole, to either of his other plays, taken from the Roman history. It is inferior in interest to *Coriolanus*, and, both in interest and power, to *Antony and Cleopatra*. It, however, abounds in admirable and affecting passages, and is remarkable for the profound knowledge of character, in which Shakspeare could scarcely fail. If there is any exception to this remark, it is in the hero of the piece himself. We do not much admire the representation here given of Julius Cæsar, nor do we think it answers to the portrait given of him in his Commentaries. He makes several vaporing and rather pedantic speeches, and does nothing. Indeed, he has nothing to do. So far the fault of the character might be the fault of the plot.

The spirit with which the poet has entered at once into the manners of the common people, and the jealousies and heart-burnings of the different factions, is shown in the first scene, when Flavius and Marullus, tribunes of the people, and some citizens of Rome, appear upon the stage.

"Flavius Thou art a cobler, art thou?

Cobler. Truly, Sir, *all* that I live by, is the *awl;* I meddle with no trade—man's matters, nor woman's matters, but *with-al*, I am indeed, Sir, a surgeon to old shoes; when they are in great danger, I recover them

FLAVIUS. But wherefore art not in thy shop to-day?
Why dost thou lead these men about the streets?

COBLER. Truly, Sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work. But indeed, Sir, we make holiday to see Cæsar, and rejoice in his triumph."

To this specimen of quaint low humor immediately follows that unexpected and animated burst of indignant eloquence, put into the mouth of one of the angry tribunes.

"MARULLUS. Wherefore rejoice?—What conquest brings he home?
What tributaries follow him to Rome,
To grace in captive-bonds his chariot-wheels?
Oh you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome!
Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climb'd up to walls and battlements,
To towers and windows, yea, to chimney-tops,
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
The live-long day with patient expectation,
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout,
That Tyber trembled underneath his banks,
To hear the replication of your sounds,
Made in his concave shores?
And do you now put on your best attire?
And do you now cull out an holiday?
And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?
Begone———
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the Gods to intermit the plague,
That needs must light on this ingratitude."

The well-known dialogue between Brutus and Cassius, in which the latter breaks the design of the conspiracy to the former, and partly gains him over to it, is a noble piece of high-minded declamation. Cassius's insisting on the pretended effeminacy of Cæsar's character, and his description of their swimming across the Tiber together, "once upon a raw and gusty day," are among the finest strokes in it. But, perhaps the whole is not equal to the short scene which follows when Cæsar enters with his train.

"BRUTUS. The games are done, and Cæsar is returning.
CASSIUS. As they pass by, pluck Casca by the sleeve,
And he will, after his sour fashion, tell you
What has proceeded worthy note to-day.
BRUTUS. I will do so; but look you, Cassius—
The angry spot doth glow on Cæsar's brow,
And all the rest look like a chidden train.
Calphurnia's cheek is pale; and Cicero
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes,
As we have seen him in the Capitol,
Being crost in conference by some senators.
CASSIUS. Casca will tell us what the matter is.
CÆSAR. Antonius——
ANTONY. Cæsar?
CÆSAR. Let me have men about me that are fat,
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep a-nights:
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look,
He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.
ANTONY. Fear him not, Cæsar; he's not dangerous;
He is a noble Roman, and well given.
CÆSAR. Would he were fatter; but I fear him not:
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer; and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men. He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony: he hears no music:
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit,
That could be mov'd to smile at anything.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease,
Whilst they behold a greater than themselves:
And therefore are they very dangerous.
I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd
Than what I fear; for always I am Cæsar
Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him."

We know hardly any passage more expressive of the genius of Shakspeare than this. It is as if he had been actually present, had known the different characters, and what they thought of one another, and had taken down what he heard and saw, their looks, words, and gestures, just as they happened.

The character of Mark Antony is farther speculated upon

where the conspirators deliberate whether he shall fall with Cæsar. Brutus is against it—

> "And for Mark Antony, think not of him;
> For he can do no more than Cæsar's arm,
> When Cæsar's head is off.
> CASSIUS. Yet do I fear him:
> For in th' ingrafted love he bears to Cæsar—
> BRUTUS. Alas, good Cassius, do not think of him;
> If he love Cæsar, all that he can do
> Is to himself, take thought, and die for Cæsar:
> And that were much, he should; for he is giv'n
> To sports, to wildness, and much company.
> TREBONIUS. There is no fear in him; let him not die:
> For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter"

They were in the wrong; and Cassius was right.

The honest manliness of Brutus is, however, sufficient to find out the unfitness of Cicero to be included in their enterprise, from his affected egotism and literary vanity.

> "O, name him not; let us not break with him;
> For he will never follow anything,
> That other men begin."

His scepticism as to prodigies, and his moralising on the weather —"This disturbed sky is not to walk in"—are in the same spirit of refined imbecility.

Shakspeare has in this play and elsewhere shown the same penetration into political character and the springs of public events as into those of every-day life. For instance, the whole design to liberate their country fails from the generous temper and overweening confidence of Brutus in the goodness of their cause and the assistance of others. Thus it has always been. Those who mean well themselves, think well of others, and fall a prey to their security. That humanity and sincerity which dispose men to resist injustice and tyranny render them unfit to cope with the cunning and power of those who are opposed to them. The friends of liberty trust to the professions of others, because they are themselves sincere, and endeavor to secure the public good with the least possible hurt to its enemies, who have no regard to anything but their own unprincipled ends, and stick

at nothing to accomplish them. Cassius was better cut out for a conspirator. His heart prompted his head. His habitual jealousy made him fear the worst that might happen, and his irritability of temper added to his inveteracy of purpose, and sharpened his patriotism. The mixed nature of his motives made him fitter to contend with bad men. The vices are never so well employed as in combating one another. Tyranny and servility are to be dealt with after their own fashion, or they will triumph over those who spare them.

The quarrel between Brutus and Cassius is managed in a masterly way. The dramatic fluctuation of passion, the calmness of Brutus, the heat of Cassius, are admirably described; and the exclamation of Cassius on hearing of the death of Portia, which he does not learn till after their reconciliation, "How 'scap'd I killing when I crost you so?" gives double force to all that has gone before. The scene between Brutus and Portia, where she endeavors to extort the secret of the conspiracy from him, is conceived in the most heroical spirit, and the burst of tenderness in Brutus—

> "You are my true and honorable wife,
> As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
> That visit my sad heart,"—

is justified by her whole behavior. Portia's breathless impatience to learn the event of the conspiracy, in the dialogue with Lucius, is full of passion. The interest which Portia takes in Brutus, and that which Calphurnia takes in the fate of Cæsar, are discriminated with the nicest precision. Mark Antony's speech over the dead body of Cæsar has been justly admired for the mixture of pathos and artifice in it: that of Brutus certainly is not so good.

The entrance of the conspirators to the house of Brutus at midnight is rendered very impressive. In the midst of this scene, we meet with one of those careless and natural digressions which occur so frequently and beautifully in Shakspeare. After Cassius has introduced his friends one by one, Brutus says,

"They are all welcome.
What watchful cares do interpose themselves
Betwixt your eyes and night?
CASSIUS. Shall I entreat a word? (*They whisper.*)
DECIUS. Here lies the east: doth not the day break here?
CASCA. No.
CINNA. O pardon, Sir, it doth; and yon grey lines,
That fret the clouds, are messengers of day.
CASCA. You shall confess, that you are both deceiv'd:
Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,
Which is a great way growing on the south,
Weighing the youthful season of the year.
Some two months hence, up higher toward the north
He first presents his fire, and the high east
Stands as the Capitol, directly here."

We cannot help thinking this graceful familiarity better than all the formality in the world. The truth of history in JULIUS CÆSAR is very ably worked up with dramatic effect. The councils of generals, the doubtful turns of battles, are represented to the life. The death of Brutus is worthy of him—it has the dignity of the Roman senator with the firmness of the Stoic philosopher. But what is perhaps better than either, is the little incident of his boy, Lucius, falling asleep over his instrument, as he is playing to his master in his tent the night before the battle. Nature had played him the same forgetful trick once before on the night of the conspiracy. The humanity of Brutus is the same on both occasions.

———"It is no matter:
Enjoy the honey heavy dew of slumber.
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,
Which busy care draws in the brains of men.
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound."

OTHELLO.

It has been said that tragedy purifies the affections by terror and pity. That is, it substitutes imaginary sympathy for mere selfishness. It gives us a high and permanent interest, beyond ourselves, in humanity as such. It raises the great, the remote, and the possible to an equality with the little, the near, and the real. It makes man a partaker with his kind. It subdues and softens the stubbornness of his will. It teaches him that there are and have been others like himself, by showing him as in a glass what they have felt, thought, and done. It opens the chambers of the human heart. It leaves nothing indifferent to us that can affect our common nature. It excites our sensibility by exhibiting the passions wound up to the utmost pitch of the power of imagination or the temptation of circumstances; and corrects their fatal excesses in ourselves by pointing to the greater extent of sufferings and crimes to which they have led others. Tragedy creates a balance of the affections. It makes us thoughtful spectators in the lists of life. It is the refiner of the species; a discipline of humanity. The habitual study of poetry and works of imagination is one chief part of a well-grounded education. A taste for liberal art is necessary to complete the character of a gentleman. Science alone is hard and mechanical. It exercises the understanding upon things out of ourselves, while it leaves the affections unemployed, or engrossed with our own immediate, narrow interests.—Othello furnishes an illustration of these remarks. It excites our sympathy in an extraordinary degree. The moral it conveys has a closer application to the concerns of human life than that of any other of

Shakspeare's plays. "It comes directly home to the bosoms and business of men." The pathos in *Lear* is indeed more dreadful and overpowering: but it is less natural, and less of every day's occurrence. We have not the same degree of sympathy with the passions described in *Macbeth*. The interest in *Hamlet* is more remote and reflex. That of OTHELLO is at once equally profound and affecting.

The picturesque contrasts of character in this play are almost as remarkable as the depth of the passion. The Moor Othello, the gentle Desdemona, the villain Iago, the good-natured Cassio, the fool Roderigo, present a range and variety of character as striking and palpable as that produced by the opposition of costume in a picture. Their distinguishing qualities stand out to the mind's eye, so that even when we are not thinking of their actions or sentiments, the idea of their persons is still as present to us as ever. These characters and the images they stamp upon the mind are the farthest asunder possible, the distance between them is immense: yet the compass of knowledge and invention which the poet has shown in embodying those extreme creations of his genius is only greater than the truth and felicity with which he has identified each character with itself, or blended their different qualities together in the same story. What a contrast the character of Othello forms to that of Iago: at the same time, the force of conception with which these two figures are opposed to each other is rendered still more intense by the complete consistency with which the traits of each character are brought out in a state of the highest finishing. The making one black and the other white, the one unprincipled, the other unfortunate in the extreme, would have answered the common purposes of effect, and satisfied the ambition of an ordinary painter of character. Shakspeare has labored the finer shades of difference in both with as much care and skill as if he had had to depend on the execution alone for the success of his design. On the other hand, Desdemona and Æmilia are not meant to be opposed with anything like strong contrast to each other. Both are, to outward appearance, characters of common life, not more distinguished than women usually are, by difference of rank and situation. The diversity of their thoughts and senti-

ments is however laid as open, their minds separated from each other by signs as plain and as little to be mistaken, as the complexions of their husbands.

The movement of the passion in Othello is exceedingly different from that of Macbeth. In Macbeth there is a violent struggle between opposite feelings, between ambition and the stings of conscience, almost from first to last: in Othello, the doubtful conflict between contrary passions, though dreadful, continues only for a short time, and the chief interest is excited by the alternate ascendency of different passions, the entire and unforeseen change from the fondest love and most unbounded confidence to the tortures of jealousy and the madness of hatred. The revenge of Othello, after it has once taken thorough possession of his mind, never quits it, but grows stronger and stronger at every moment of its delay. The nature of the Moor is noble, confiding, tender, and generous; but his blood is of the most inflammable kind; and being once roused by a sense of his wrongs, he is stopped by no considerations of remorse or pity till he has given a loose to all the dictates of his rage and his despair. It is in working his noble nature up to this extremity through rapid but gradual transitions, in raising passion to its height from the smallest beginnings and in spite of all obstacles, in painting the expiring conflict between love and hatred, tenderness and resentment, jealousy and remorse, in unfolding the strength and weaknesses of our nature, in uniting sublimity of thought with the anguish of the keenest wo, in putting in motion the various impulses that agitate this our mortal being, and at last blending them in that noble tide of deep and sustained passion, impetuous but majestic, that "flows on to the Propontic, and knows no ebb," that Shakspeare has shown the mastery of his genius and of his power over the human heart. The third act of Othello is his master-piece, not of knowledge or passion separately, but of the two combined; of the knowledge of character with the expression of passion, of consummate art in the keeping up of appearances with the profound workings of nature, and the convulsive movements of uncontrollable agony, of the power of inflicting torture and of suffering it. Not only is the tumult of passion heaved up from the very bottom of the soul, but

every the slightest undulation of feeling is seen on the surface as it arises from the impulses of imagination or the different probabilities maliciously suggested by Iago. The progressive preparation for the catastrophe is wonderfully managed from the Moor's first gallant recital of the story of his love, of "the spells and witchcraft he had used," from his unlooked-for and romantic success, the fond satisfaction with which he dotes on his own happiness, the unreserved tenderness of Desdemona and her innocent importunities in favor of Cassio, irritating the suspicions instilled into her husband's mind by the perfidy of Iago, and rankling there to poison, till he loses all command of himself, and his rage can only be appeased by blood. She is introduced, just before Iago begins to put his scheme in practice, pleading for Cassio with all the thoughtless gaiety of friendship and winning confidence in the love of Othello.

> "What! Michael Cassio?
> That came a wooing with you, and so many a time,
> When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,
> Hath ta'en your part, to have so much to do
> To bring him in?—Why this is not a boon:
> 'T is as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
> Or feed on nourishing meats, or keep you warm;
> Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
> To your person. Nay, when I have a suit,
> Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,
> It shall be full of poise, and fearful to be granted."

Othello's confidence, at first only staggered by broken hints and insinuations, recovers itself at sight of Desdemona; and he exclaims,

> "If she be false, O then Heav'n mocks itself;
> I'll not believe it."

But presently after, on brooding over his suspicions by himself, and yielding to his apprehensions of the worst, his smothered jealousy breaks out into open fury, and he returns to demand satisfaction of Iago like a wild beast stung with the envenomed shaft of the hunters. "Look where he comes," &c. In this state of exasperation and violence, after the first paroxysms of

his grief and tenderness have had their vent in that passionate apostrophe, "I felt not Cassio's kisses on her lips," Iago by false aspersions, and by presenting the most revolting images to his mind,* easily turns the storm of passion from himself against Desdemona, and works him up into a trembling agony of doubt and fear, in which he abandons all his love and hopes in a breath.

> "Now do I see 't is true. Look here, Iago,
> All my fond love thus do I blow to Heav'n. 'T is gone.
> Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell;
> Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne
> To tyrannous hate! Swell, bosom, with thy fraught;
> For 't is of aspics' tongues"

From this time, his raging thoughts "never look back, ne'er ebb to humble love," till his revenge is sure of its object, the painful regrets and involuntary recollections of past circumstances which cross his mind amidst the dim trances of passion, aggravating the sense of his wrongs, but not shaking his purpose. Once, indeed, where Iago shows him Cassio with the handkerchief in his hand, and making sport (as he thinks) of his misfortunes, the intolerable bitterness of his feelings, the extreme sense of shame, makes him fall to praising her accomplishments, and relapse into a momentary fit of weakness, "Yet the pity of it, Iago!—O, Iago, the pity of it!" But this returning fondness only serves, as it is managed by Iago, to whet his revenge, and set his heart more against her. In his conversations with Desdemona, the persuasion of her guilt, and the immediate proofs of her duplicity seem to irritate his resentment and aversion to her; but in the scene immediately preceding her death, the recollection of his love returns upon him in all its tenderness and force; and after her death, he all at once forgets his wrongs in the sudden and irreparable sense of his loss:

> "My wife! my wife! what wife? I have no wife.
> Oh insupportable! oh heavy hour!"

* See the passage beginning, "It is impossible you should see this, were they as prime as goats," &c.

This happens before he is assured of her innocence; but afterwards his remorse is as dreadful as his revenge has been, and yields only to fixed and death-like despair. His farewell speech, before he kills himself, in which he conveys his reasons to the senate for the murder of his wife, is equal to the first speech, in which he gave them an account of his courtship of her, and "his whole course of love." Such an ending was alone worthy of such a commencement.

If anything could add to the force of our sympathy with Othello, or compassion for his fate, it would be the frankness and generosity of his nature, which so little deserve it. When Iago first begins to practise upon his unsuspecting friendship, he answers—

> ————" 'T is not to make me jealous,
> To say—my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
> Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;
> Where virtue is, these are most virtuous.
> Nor from my own weak merits will I draw
> The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
> For she had eyes, and chose me."

This character is beautifully (and with affecting simplicity) confirmed by what Desdemona herself says of him to Æmilia after she has lost the handkerchief, the first pledge of his love to her.

> "Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse
> Full of cruzadoes. And, but my noble Moor
> Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness,
> As jealous creatures are, it were enough
> To put him to ill thinking.
> ÆMILIA. Is he not jealous?
> DESDEMONA. Who, he? I think the sun where he was born
> Drew all such humors from him."

In a short speech of Æmilia's, there occurs one of those side-intimations of the fluctuations of passion which we seldom meet with but in Shakspeare. After Othello has resolved upon the death of his wife, and bids her dismiss her attendant for the night, she answers,

"I will, my Lord.
ÆMILIA. How goes it now? *He looks gentler than he did.*"

Shakspeare has here put into half a line what some authors would have spun out into ten set speeches.

The character of Desdemona herself is inimitable both in itself, and as it contrasts with Othello's groundless jealousy, and with the foul conspiracy of which she is the innocent victim. Her beauty and external graces are only indirectly glanced at; we see "her visage in her mind;" her character everywhere predominates over her person.

> "A maiden never bold:
> Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
> Blushed at itself."

There is one fine compliment paid to her by Cassio, who exclaims triumphantly when she comes ashore at Cyprus after the storm,

> "Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,
> As having sense of beauty, do omit
> Their mortal natures, letting safe go by
> The divine Desdemona."

In general, as is the case with most of Shakspeare's females, we lose sight of her personal charms in her attachment and devotedness to her husband. "She is subdued even to the very quality of her lord;" and to Othello's "honors and his valiant parts her soul and fortunes consecrates." The lady protests so much herself, and she is as good as her word. The truth of conception, with which timidity and boldness are united in the same character, is marvellous. The extravagance of her resolutions, the pertinacity of her affections, may be said to arise out of the gentleness of her nature. They imply an unreserved reliance on the purity of her own intentions, an entire surrender of her fears to her love, a knitting of herself (heart and soul) to the fate of another. Bating the commencement of her passion, which is a little fantastical and headstrong (though even that may perhaps be consistently accounted for from her ina

bility to resist a rising inclination*), her whole character consists in having no will of her own, no prompter but her obedience. Her romantic turn is only a consequence of the domestic and practical part of her disposition; and instead of following Othello to the wars she would gladly have "remained at home a moth of peace," if her husband could have stayed with her. Her resignation and angelic sweetness of temper do not desert her at the last. The scenes in which she laments and tries to account for Othello's estrangement from her are exquisitely beautiful. After he has struck her, and called her names, she says,

> ———"O good Iago,
> What shall I do to win my lord again?
> Good friend, go to him; for by the light of heaven,
> I know not how I lost him. Here I kneel:—
> If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
> Either in discourse, or thought, or actual deed,
> Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense
> Delighted them on any other form;
> Or that I do not, and ever did,
> And ever will, though he do shake me off
> To beggarly divorcement, love him dearly,
> Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much,
> And his unkindness may defeat my life,
> But never taint my love.
> IAGO. I pray you be content; 't is but his humor.
> The business of the state does him offence.
> DESDEMONA. If 't were no other!"—

The scene which follows with Æmilia and the song of the Willow, are equally beautiful, and show the author's extreme power of varying the expression of passion, in all its moods and in all circumstances.

> "ÆMILIA. Would you had never seen him!
> DESDEMONA. So would not I: my love doth so approve him,
> That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns,
> Have grace and favor in them," &c.

* "IAGO. Ay, too gentle.
OTHELLO Nay, that's certain."

Not the unjust suspicions of Othello, not Iago's treachery, place Desdemona in a more amiable or interesting light than the casual conversation (half earnest, half jest) between her and Æmilia, on the common behavior of women to their husbands. This dialogue takes place just before the last fatal scene. If Othello had overheard it, it would have prevented the whole catastrophe; but then it would have spoiled the play.

The character of Iago is one of the supererogations of Shakspeare's genius. Some persons, more nice than wise, have thought this whole character unnatural, because his villainy is *without a sufficient motive*. Shakspeare, who was as good a philosopher as he was a poet, thought otherwise. He knew that the love of power, which is another name for the love of mischief, is natural to man. He would know this as well or better than if it had been demonstrated to him by a logical diagram, merely from seeing children paddle in the dirt, or kill flies for sport. We might ask those who think the character of Iago not natural, why they go to see it performed, but from the interest it excites, the sharper edge which it sets on the curiosity and imagination? Why do they go to see tragedies in general? Why do we always read the accounts in the newspapers of dreadful fires and shocking murders, but for the same reason? Why do so many persons frequent trials and executions, or why do the lower classes almost universally take delight in barbarous sports and cruelty to animals, but because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused and stimulated to the utmost? Whenever this principle is not under the restraint of humanity, or the sense of moral obligation, there are no excesses to which it will not of itself give rise, without the assistance of any other motive, either of passion or self-interest. Iago in fact belongs to a class of characters common to Shakspeare, and at the same time peculiar to him; whose heads are as acute and active as their hearts are hard and callous. Iago is, to be sure, an extreme instance of the kind; that is to say, of diseased intellectual activity, with an almost perfect indifference to moral good or evil, or rather with a decided preference of the latter, because it falls more readily in with his favorite propensity, gives greater zest to his

thoughts and scope to his actions. Be it observed, too (for the sake of those who are for squaring all human actions by the maxims of Rochefoucauld), that he is quite or nearly as indifferent to his own fate as to that of others; he runs all risks for a trifling and doubtful advantage; and is himself the dupe and victim of his ruling passion—an insatiable craving after action of the most difficult and dangerous kind. "Our ancient" is a philosopher, who fancies that a lie that kills has more point in it than an alliteration or an antithesis; who thinks a fatal experiment on the peace of a family a better thing than watching the palpitations in the heart of a flea in a microscope; who plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his ingenuity, and stabs men in the dark to prevent *ennui*. Now this, though it be sport, yet is dreadful sport. There is no room for trifling and indifference, nor scarcely for the appearance of it; the very object of his whole plot is to keep his faculties stretched on the rack, in a state of watch and ward, in a sort of breathless suspense, without a moment's interval of repose. He has a desperate stake to play for, like a man who fences with poisoned weapons, and has business enough on his hands to call for the whole stock of his sober circumspection, his dark duplicity, and insidious gravity. He resembles a man who sits down to play at chess, for the sake of the difficulty and complication of the game, and who immediately becomes absorbed in it. His amusements, if such they may be called, are severe and saturnine—even his wit blisters. His gaiety, such as it is, arises from the success of his treachery; his ease from the torture he has inflicted on others.

Even if other circumstances permitted it, the part he has to play with Othello requires that he should assume the most serious concern, and something of the plausibility of a confessor. "His cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam." He is repeatedly called "honest Iago," which looks as if there were something suspicious in his appearance which admitted a different construction. The tone which he adopts in the scenes with Roderigo, Desdemona, and Cassio, is only a relaxation from the more arduous business of the play, yet there is in all his conversation an inveterate misanthropy, a licentious

keenness of perception, which is always sagacious of evil, and snuffs up the tainted scent of its quarry with rancorous delight.

The general ground-work of the character, however, is not absolute malignity, but a want of moral principle, or an indifference to the real consequences of the actions, which the meddling perversity of his disposition, and love of immediate excitement, lead him to commit. He is an amateur of tragedy in real life, and instead of exercising his ingenuity on imaginary characters, or long-forgotten incidents, he takes the bolder and more desperate course of getting up his plot at home, casts the principal parts among his nearest friends and connexions, and rehearses it in downright earnest, with steady nerves and unabated resolution. The character is a complete abstraction of the intellectual from the moral being; or, in other words, consists in an absorption of every common feeling in the virulence of his understanding, the deliberate wilfulness of his purposes, and his restless, untameable love of mischievous contrivance.

In the general dialogue and reflections, which are an accompaniment to the progress of the catastrophe, there is a constant overflowing of gall and bitterness. The acuteness of his malice fastens upon everything alike, and pursues the most distant analogy of evil with provoking sagacity. His mirth is not natural and cheerful, but forced and extravagant, partaking of the intense activity of mind and cynical contempt of others in which it originates. Iago is not, like Candide, a believer in optimism, but seems to have a thorough hatred or distrust of everything of the kind, and to dwell with gloating satisfaction on whatever can interrupt the enjoyment of others, and gratify his moody irritability.

One of his most characteristic speeches is that immediately after the marriage of Othello.

> "Roderigo. What a full fortune does the thick lips owe
> If he can carry't thus!
> Iago. Call up her father:
> Rouse him (*Othello*), make after him, poison his delight,
> Proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen:
> And though he in a fertile climate dwell,
> Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy,

Yet throw such changes of vexation on 't,
As it may lose some color."

The pertinacious logical following up of his favorite principle in this passage is admirable.

In the next passage, his imagination runs riot in the mischief he is plotting, and breaks out into the wildness and impetuosity of real enthusiasm.

"RODERIGO. Here is her father's house: I'll call aloud.
IAGO. Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell,
As when, by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities."

One of his most favorite topics, on which he is rich indeed, and in descanting on which his spleen serves him for a Muse, is the disproportionate match between Desdemona and the Moor. This is a clue to the character of the lady which he is by no means ready to part with. It is brought forward in the first scene, and he recurs to it, when in answer to his insinuations against Desdemona, Roderigo says,

"I cannot believe that in her—she's full of most bless'd conditions.
IAGO. Bless'd fig's end! The wine she drinks is made of grapes: if she had been bless'd, she would never have married the Moor."

And again with still more spirit and fatal effect afterwards, when he turns this very suggestion arising in Othello's own breast to her prejudice.

"OTHELLO. And yet how nature erring from itself—
IAGO. Ay, there's the point;—as, to be bold with you,
Not to affect many proposed matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree," &c.

This is probing to the quick. Iago here turns the character of poor Desdemona, as it were, inside out. It is certain that nothing but the genius of Shakspeare could have preserved the entire interest and delicacy of the part, and have even drawn an additiona elegance and dignity from the peculiar circum

stances in which she is placed. The character indeed has always had the greatest charm for minds of the finest sensibility. For our own part, we are a little of Iago's council in this matter; and all circumstances considered, and platonics out of the question, if we were to cast the complexion of Desdemona physiognomically, we should say she had a very fair skin, and very light auburn hair, inclining to yellow. We at the same time give her credit for purity and delicacy of sentiment; but it so happens that purity and grossness sometimes

> "Nearly are allied,
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

Yet the reverse does not hold; so uncertain and undefinable a thing is moral character! It is no wonder that Iago had some contempt for it, "who knew all qualities of human dealings with a learned spirit." There is considerable gaiety and ease in his dialogue with Æmilia and Desdemona on their landing. It is then holiday time with him; but yet the general satire is biting, and his idea of human character is finely expressed in what he says to Desdemona when she asks him how he would praise her—

> "Oh, gentle lady, do not put me to it,
> For I am nothing if not critical."

The habitual licentiousness of Iago's conversation is not to be traced to the pleasure he takes in gross or lascivious images, but to his desire of finding out the worst side of everything, and of proving himself an over-match for appearances. He has none of "the milk of human kindness" in his composition. His imagination rejects everything that has not a strong infusion of the most unpalatable ingredients; his moral constitution digests only poisons. Virtue or goodness or whatever has the least "relish of salvation in it," is, to his depraved appetite, sickly and insipid: and he even resents the good opinion entertained of his own integrity, as if it were an affront cast on the masculine sense and spirit of his character. Thus, at the meeting between Othello and Desdemona, he exclaims—"Oh, you are well tuned now: but I'll set down the pegs that make this music, *as honest*

as I am"—his character of *bonhommie* not sitting at all easily upon him. In the scenes with Othello, where he has to put his passion for theoretical evil into practice, with great risk to himself, and with dreadful consequences to others, he is proportionably guarded, insidious, dark, and deliberate. Nothing ever came up to the profound dissimulation and dexterous artifice of the well-known dialogue in the third act, where he first enters upon the execution of his design.

"IAGO. My noble lord.
OTHELLO. What dost thou say, Iago?
IAGO. Did Michael Cassio,
When you woo'd my lady, know of your love?
OTHELLO. He did, from first to last.
Why dost thou ask?
IAGO But for a satisfaction of my thought,
No further harm.
OTHELLO. Why of thy thought, Iago?
IAGO. I did not think he had been acquainted with her.
OTHELLO. O yes, and went between us very oft—
IAGO. Indeed?
OTHELLO. Indeed! ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?
IAGO. Honest, my lord?
OTHELLO. Ay, honest?
IAGO. My lord, for aught I know.
OTHELLO. What dost thou think?
IAGO. Think, my lord?
OTHELLO. Think, my lord? By heaven thou echo'st me.
As if there was some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown."—

The stops and breaks, the deep internal workings of treachery under the mask of love and honesty, the anxious watchfulness the cool earnestness, and if we may so say, the *passion* of hypocrisy marked in every line, receive their last finishing in that inimitably characteristic burst of pretended indignation at Othello's doubts of his sincerity.

"O grace! O Heaven forgive me!
Are you a man? Have you a soul or sense?
God be wi' you; take mine office. O wretched fool,

That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
To be direct and honest, is not safe.
I thank you for this profit; and from hence
I'll love no friend, since love breeds such offence."

If Iago is detestable enough when he has business on his hands and all his engines at work, he is still worse when he has nothing to do, and we only see into the hollowness of his heart. His indifference when Othello falls into a swoon, is perfectly diabolical, but quite in character.

"IAGO. How is it, General? Have you not hurt your head?
OTHELLO. Dost thou mock me?
IAGO. I mock you not, by Heaven," &c.

The part indeed would hardly be tolerated, even as a foil to the virtue and generosity of the other characters in the play, but for its indefatigable industry and inexhaustible resources, which divert the attention of the spectator (as well as his own) from the end he has in view to the means by which it must be accomplished. Edmund the Bastard in *Lear* is something of the same character, placed in less difficult circumstances. Zanga is a vulgar caricature of it.

TIMON OF ATHENS.

Timon of Athens always appeared to us to be written with as intense a feeling of his subject as any one play of Shakspeare. It is one of the few in which he seems to be in earnest throughout, never to trifle or go out of his way. He does not relax in his efforts, nor lose sight of the unity of his design. It is the only play of our author in which spleen is the predominant feeling of the mind. It is as much a satiré as a play: and contains some of the finest pieces of invective possible to be conceived, both in the snarling, captious answers of the cynic Apemantus, and in the impassioned and more terrible imprecations of Timon. The latter remind the classical reader of the force and swelling impetuosity of the moral declamations in Juvenal, while the former have all the keenness and caustic severity of the old Stoic Philosophers. The soul of Diogenes appears to have been seated on the lips of Apemantus. The churlish profession of misanthropy in the cynic is contrasted with the profound feeling of it in Timon, and also with the soldier-like and determined resentment of Alcibiades against his countrymen, who have banished him, though this forms only an incidental episode in the tragedy.

The fable consists of a single event;—of the transition from the highest pomp and profusion of artificial refinement to the most abject state of savage life, and privation of all social intercourse. The change is as rapid as it is complete; nor is the description of the rich and generous Timon, banquetting in gilded palaces, pampered by every luxury, prodigal of his hospitality, courted by crowds of flatterers, poets, painters, lords, ladies, who—

" Follow his strides, his lobbies fill with tendance,
Rain sacrificial whisperings in his ear ;
And through him drink the free air "—

more striking than that of the sudden falling off of his friends and fortune, and his naked exposure in a wild forest digging roots from the earth for his sustenance, with a lofty spirit of self-denial, and bitter scorn of the world, which raise him higher in our esteem than the dazzling gloss of prosperity could do. He grudges himself the means of life, and is only busy in preparing his grave. How forcibly is the difference between what he was, and what he is described in Apemantus's taunting questions, when he comes to reproach him with the change in his way of life !

——— " What, think'st thou
That the bleak air, thy boisterous chamberlain,
Will put thy shirt on warm ? will these mossed trees
That have out-liv'd the eagle, page thy heels,
And skip where thou point'st out ? will the cold brook,
Candied with ice, caudle thy morning taste
To cure thy o'er-night's surfeit ? Call the creatures,
Whose naked natures live in all the spight
Of wreakful heav'n, whose bare unhoused trunks,
To the conflicting elements expos'd,
Answer mere nature, bid them flatter thee "

The manners are everywhere preserved with distinct truth. The poet and painter are very skilfully played off against one another, both affecting great attention to the other, and each taken up with his own vanity, and the superiority of his own art. Shakspeare has put into the mouth of the former a very lively description of the genius of poetry and of his own in particular.

——— " A thing slipt idly from me.
Our poesy is as a gum, which issues
From whence 'tis nourish'd. The fire i' the flint
Shows not till it be struck : our gentle flame
Provokes itself—and like the current flies
Each bound it chafes."———

The hollow friendship and shuffling evasions of the Athenian lords, their smooth professions and pitiful ingratitude, are very satisfactorily exposed, as well as the different disguises to which the meanness of self-love resorts in such cases to hide a want of generosity and good faith. The lurking selfishness of Apemantus does not pass undetected amidst the grossness of his sarcasms and his contempt for the pretensions of others. Even the two courtezans who accompany Alcibiades to the cave of Timon are very characteristically sketched; and the thieves who come to visit him are also "true men" in their way.—An exception to this general picture of selfish depravity is found in the old and honest steward Flavius, to whom Timon pays a full tribute of tenderness. Shakspeare was unwilling to draw a picture "*all over ugly with hypocrisy.*" He owed this character to the good-natured solicitations of his Muse. His mind was well said by Ben Jonson to be the "sphere of humanity."

The moral sententiousness of this play equals that of Lord Bacon's Treatise on the Wisdom of the Ancients, and is indeed seasoned with greater variety. Every topic of contempt or indignation is here exhausted; but, while the sordid licentiousness of Apemantus, which turns everything to gall and bitterness, shows only the natural virulence of his temper and antipathy to good or evil alike, Timon does not utter an imprecation without betraying the extravagant workings of disappointed passion, of love altered to hate. Apemantus sees nothing good in any object, and exaggerates whatever is disgusting: Timon is tormented with the perpetual contrast between things and appearances; between the fresh, tempting outside and the rottenness within, and invokes mischiefs on the heads of mankind proportioned to the sense of his wrongs and of their treacheries. He impatiently cries out, when he finds the gold,

> "This yellow slave
> Will knit and break religions; bless the accurs'd;
> Make the hoar leprosy ador'd; place thieves,
> And give them title, knee and approbation,
> With senators on the bench; this is it,
> That makes the wappen'd widow wed again;
> She, whom the spital-house

Would cast the gorge at, *this embalms and spiced*
To th' April day again."

One of his most dreadful imprecations is that which occurs immediately on his leaving Athens.

" Let me look back upon thee, O thou wall,
That girdlest in those wolves! Dive in the earth,
And fence not Athens! Matrons, turn incontinent;
Obedience fail in children; slaves and fools
Pluck the grave wrinkled senate from the bench,
And minister in their steads. To general filths
Convert o' th' instant green virginity!
Do't in your parents' eyes. Bankrupts, hold fast;
Rather than render back, out with your knives,
And cut your trusters' throats! Bound servants, steal:
Large-handed robbers your grave masters are,
And pill by law. Maid, to thy master's bed:
Thy mistress is o' th' brothel. Son of sixteen,
Pluck the lin'd crutch from thy old limping sire,
And with it beat his brains out! Fear and piety,
Religion to the Gods, peace, justice, truth,
Domestic awe, night-rest, and neighborhood,
Instructions, manners, mysteries and trades,
Degrees, observances, customs, and laws,
Decline to your confounding contraries;
And let confusion live!—Plagues incident to men,
Your potent and infectious fevers heap
On Athens, ripe for stroke! Thou cold sciatica,
Cripple our senators, that their limbs may halt
As lamely as their manners! Lust and liberty
Creep in the minds and manners of our youth,
That 'gainst the stream of virtue they may strive,
And drown themselves in riot! Itches, blains,
Sow all th' Athenian bosoms; and their crop
Be general leprosy: breath infect breath,
That their society (as their friendship) may
Be merely poison!"

Timon here is just as ideal in his passion for ill as he had before been in his belief of good. Apemantus was satisfied with the mischief existing in the world, and with his own ill-nature One of the most decisive intimations of Timon's morbid jealousy of appearances is in his answer to Apemantus, who asks him,

"What things in the world canst thou nearest compare with thy flatterers?"

TIMON. Women nearest: but men, men are the things themselves."

Apemantus, it is said, "loved few things better than to abhor himself." This is not the case with Timon, who neither loves to abhor himself nor others. All his vehement misanthropy is forced, up-hill work. From the slippery turns of fortune, from the turmoils of passion and adversity, he wishes to sink into the quiet of the grave. On that subject his thoughts are intent, on that he finds time and place to grow romantic. He digs his own grave by the sea-shore; contrives his funeral ceremonies amidst the pomp of desolation, and builds his mausoleum of the elements.

> "Come not to me again: but say to Athens,
> Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
> Upon the beached verge of the salt flood;
> Which once a-day with his embossed froth
> The turbulent surge shall cover.—Thither come,
> And let my grave-stone be your oracle."

And again, Alcibiades, after reading his epitaph, says of him,

> "These well express in thee thy latter spirits:
> Though thou abhorred'st in us our human griefs,
> Scorn'd'st our brain's flow, and those our droplets, which
> From niggard nature fall; yet rich conceit
> Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
> On thy low grave:"——

thus making the winds his funeral dirge, his mourner the murmuring ocean; and seeking in the everlasting solemnities of nature oblivion of the transitory splendor of his life-time.

CORIOLANUS.

SHAKSPEARE has in this play shown himself well versed in history and state-affairs. CORIOLANUS is a store-house of political commonplaces. Any one who studies it may save himself the trouble of reading Burke's Reflections, or Paine's Rights of Man, or the Debates in both Houses of Parliament since the French Revolution or our own. The arguments for and against aristocracy or democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakspeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it. The cause of the people is indeed but ill calculated as a subject for poetry; it admits of rhetoric, which goes into argument and explanation, but it presents no immediate or distinct images to the mind, "no jutting frieze, buttress, or coigne of vantage" for poetry "to make its pendant and procreant cradle in." The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power. The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty; it takes from one thing to add to another: it accumulates circumstances together to give the greatest possible effect to a favorite object. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty: it judges of things, not according to their immediate impression on the mind, but according to their relations to one another. The one is a monopolizing faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of pre-

sent excitement by inequality and disproportion; the other is a distributive faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of ultimate good, by justice and proportion. The one is an aristocratical, the other a republican faculty. The principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle. It aims at effect, it exists by contrast. It admits of no medium. It is everything by excess. It rises above the ordinary standard of sufferings and crimes. It presents an imposing appearance. It shows its head turreted, crowned and crested. Its front is gilt and blood-stained. Before it, "it carries noise, and behind it, it leaves tears." It has its altars and its victims, sacrifices, human sacrifices. Kings, priests, nobles, are its train-bearers; tyrants and slaves its executioners. "Carnage is its daughter." Poetry is right-royal. It puts the individual for the species, the one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep or a herd of wild asses, is a more poetical object than his prey; and we even take part with the lordly beasts, because our vanity or some other feeling makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party. So we feel some concern for the poor citizens of Rome when they meet together to compare their wants and grievances, till Coriolanus comes in, and with blows and big words drives this set of "poor rats," this rascal scum, to their homes and beggary, before him. There is nothing heroical in a multitude of miserable rogues not wishing to be starved, or complaining that they are like to be so; but when a single man comes forward to brave their cries, and to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will, our admiration of his prowess is immediately coupled with contempt for their pusillanimity. The insolence of power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority, or even the natural resistance to it, has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination; it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others, that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed.

The love of power in ourselves, and the admiration of it in others, are both natural to man; the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp, and circum-

stance, has more attraction than abstract right. Coriolanus complains of the fickleness of the people: yet the instant he cannot gratify his pride and obstinacy at their expense, he turns his arms against his country. If his country was not worth defending, why did he build his pride on its defence? He is a conqueror and a hero; he conquers other countries, and makes this a plea for enslaving his own; and when he is prevented from doing so, he leagues with its enemies to destroy his country. He rates the people "as if he were a God to punish, and not a man of their infirmity." He scoffs at one of their tribunes for maintaining their rights and franchises: "Mark you his absolute *shall?*" not marking his own absolute *will* to take everything from them; his impatience of the slightest opposition to his own pretensions being in proportion to their arrogance and absurdity. If the great and powerful had the beneficence and wisdom of gods, then all this would have been well: if with greater knowledge of what is good for the people, they had as great a care for their interest as they have for their own, if they were seated above the world, sympathizing with the welfare, but not feeling the passions of men, receiving neither good nor hurt from them, but bestowing their benefits as free gifts on them, they might then rule over them like another Providence. But this is not the case. Coriolanus is unwilling that the senate should show their "cares" for the people, lest their "cares" should be construed into "fears," to the subversion of all due authority; and he is no sooner disappointed in his schemes to deprive the people not only of the cares of the state, but of all power to redress themselves, than Volumnia is made madly to exclaim,

> "Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,
> And occupations perish."

This is but natural: it is but natural for a mother to have more regard for her son than for a whole city; but then the city should be left to take some care of itself. The care of the state cannot, we here see, be safely entrusted to maternal affection, or to the domestic charities of high life. The great have private feelings of their own, to which the interests of humanity

and justice must courtesy. Their interests are so far from being the same as those of the community, that they are in direct and necessary opposition to them; their power is at the expense of *our* weakness; their riches, of *our* poverty; their pride, of *our* degradation; their splendor, of *our* wretchedness; their tyranny, of *our* servitude. If they had the superior intelligence ascribed to them (which they have not) it would only render them so much more formidable; and from gods would convert them into devils. The whole dramatic moral of CORIOLANUS is, that those who have little shall have less, and that those who have much shall take all that others have left. The people are poor, therefore they ought to be starved. They are slaves, therefore they ought to be beaten. They work hard, therefore they ought to be treated like beasts of burden. They are ignorant, therefore they ought not to be allowed to feel that they want food, or clothing, or rest; that they are enslaved, oppressed, and miserable. This is the logic of the imagination and the passions; which seek to aggrandize what excites admiration, and to heap contempt on misery; to raise power into tyranny, and to make tyranny absolute; to thrust down that which is low still lower, and to make wretches desperate: to exalt magistrates into kings, kings into gods; to degrade subjects to the rank of slaves, and slaves to the condition of brutes. The history of mankind is a romance, a mask, a tragedy constructed upon the principles of *poetical justice;* it is a noble or royal hunt, in which what is sport to the few, is death to the many, and in which the spectators halloo and encourage the strong to set upon the weak, and cry havoc in the chase, though they do not share in the spoil. We may depend upon it that what men delight to read in books, they will put in practice in reality.

One of the most natural traits in this play is the difference of the interest taken in the success of Coriolanus by his wife and mother. The one is only anxious for his honor; the other is fearful for his life.

"VOLUMNIA. Methinks I hither hear your husband's drum:
I see him pluck Aufidius down by th' hair:
Methinks I see him stamp thus—and call thus—
Come on, ye cowards: ye were got in fear

Though you were born in Rome; his bloody brow
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes
Like to a harvest man, that's task'd to mow
Or all, or lose his hire.
VIRGILIA. His bloody brow! Oh Jupiter, no blood.
VOLUMNIA. Away, you fool; it more becomes a man
Than gilt his trophy. The breast of Hecuba,
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier
Than Hector's forehead, when it spit forth blood
At Grecian swords contending."

When she hears the trumpets that proclaim her son's return, she says in the true spirit of a Roman matron,

"These are the ushers of Martius: before him
He carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears.
Death, that dark spirit, in 's nervy arm doth lie,
Which being advanc'd, declines, and then men die."

Coriolanus himself is a complete character: his love of reputation, his contempt of popular opinion, his pride and modesty, are consequences of each other. His pride consists in the inflexible sternness of his will: his love of glory is a determined desire to bear down all opposition, and to extort the admiration both of friends and foes. His contempt for popular favor, his unwillingness to hear his own praises, spring from the same source. He cannot contradict the praises that are bestowed upon him; therefore he is impatient at hearing them. He would enforce the good opinion of others by his actions, but does not want their acknowledgments in words.

"Pray now, no more: my mother,
Who has a charter to extol her blood,
When she does praise me, grieves me."

His magnanimity is of the same kind. He admires in an enemy that courage which he honors in himself: he places himself on the hearth of Aufidius with the same confidence that he would have met him in the field, and feels that by putting himself in his power, he takes from him all temptation for using it against him.

In the title-page of CORIOLANUS, it is said at the bottom of the Dramatis Personæ, "The whole history exactly followed, and many of the principal speeches copied from the life of Coriolanus in Plutarch." It will be interesting to our readers to see how far this is the case. Two of the principal scenes, those between Coriolanus and Aufidius and between Coriolanus and his mother, are thus given in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, 1759. The first is as follows:

"It was even twilight when he entered the city of Antium, and many people met him in the streets, but no man knew him. So he went directly to Tullus Aufidius' house, and when he came thither, he got him up straight to the chimney-hearth, and sat him down, and spake not a word to any man, his face all muffled over. They of the house spying him, wondered what he should be, and yet they durst not bid him rise. For ill-favoredly muffled and disguised as he was, yet there appeared a certain majesty in his countenance and in his silence: whereupon they went to Tullus, who was at supper, to tell of the strange disguising of this man. Tullus rose presently from the board, and coming towards him, asked him what he was, and wherefore he came. Then Martius unmuffled himself, and after he had paused awhile, making no answer, he said unto himself, If thou knowest me not yet, Tullus, and seeing me, dost not perhaps believe me to be the man I am indeed, I must of necessity discover myself to be that I am. 'I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thyself particularly, and to all the Volsces generally, great hurt and mischief, which I cannot deny for my surname of Coriolanus that I bear. For I never had other benefit nor recompense of the true and painful service I have done, and the extreme dangers I have been in, but this only surname: a good memory and witness of the malice and displeasure thou shouldest bear me. Indeed the name only remaineth with me; for the rest, the envy and cruelty of the people of Rome have taken from me, by the sufferance of the dastardly nobility and magistrates, who have forsaken me, and let me be banished by the people. This extremity hath now driven me to come as a poor suitor, to take thy chimney-hearth, not of any hope I have to save my life thereby. For if I had feared death, I would not have come hither to put myself in hazard: but pricked forward with desire to be revenged of them that thus have banished me, which now I do begin, by putting my person into the hands of their enemies. Wherefore, if thou hast any heart to be wreked of the injuries thy enemies have done thee, speed thee now, and let my misery serve thy turn, and so use it as my service may be a benefit to the Volsces: promising thee, that I will fight with better good will for all you, than I did when I was against you, knowing that they fight more valiantly who know the force of the enemy, than such as have never proved it. And if it be so that thou dare not, and that thou art weary to prove fortune any more, then am I also

weary to live any longer. And it were no wisdom in thee to save the life of him who hath been heretofore thy mortal enemy, and whose service now can nothing help, nor pleasure thee.' Tullus hearing what he said, was a marvellous glad man, and taking him by the hand, he said unto him: 'Stand up, O Martius, and be of good cheer, for in proffering thyself unto us, thou doest us great honor: and by this means thou mayest hope also of greater things at all the Volsces' hands' So he feasted him for that time, and entertained him in the honorablest manner he could, talking with him of no other matter at that present: but within few days after, they fell to consultation together in what sort they should begin their wars."

The meeting between Coriolanus and his mother is also nearly the same as in the play.

"Now was Martius set there in the chair of state, with all the honors o a general, and when he spied the women coming afar off, he marvelled what the matter meant: but afterwards knowing his wife which came foremost, he determined at the first to persist in his obstinate and inflexible rancor. But overcome in the end with natural affection, and being altogether altered to see them, his heart would not serve him to tarry their coming to his chair, but coming down in haste, he went to meet them, and first he kissed his mother, and embraced her a pretty while, then his wife and little children. And nature so wrought with him, that the tears fell from his eyes, and he could not keep himself from making much of them, but yielded to the affection of his blood, as if he had been violently carried with the fury of a most swift-running stream. After he had thus lovingly received them, and perceiving that his mother Volumnia would begin to speak to him, he called the chiefest of the council of the Volsces to hear what she would say. Then she spake in this sort: 'If we held our peace, my son, and determined not to speak, the state of our poor bodies, and present sight of our raiment, would easily betray to thee what life we have led at home, since thy exile and abode abroad; but think now with thyself, how much more unfortunate than all the women living, we are come hither, considering that the sight which should be most pleasant to all others to behold, spiteful fortune had made most fearful to us: making myself to see my son, and my daughter here her husband, besieging the walls of his native country: so as that which is the only comfort to all others, in their adversity and misery, to pray unto the Gods, and to call to them for aid, is the only thing which plungeth us into most deep perplexity. For we cannot, alas, together pray, both for victory to our country, and for safety of thy life also: but a world of grievous curses, yea, more than any mortal enemy can heap upon us, are forcibly wrapped up in our prayers. For the bitter sop of most hard choice is offered thy wife and children, to forego one of the two: either to lose the person of thyself, or the nurse of their native country. For myself, my son, I am determined not to tarry till fortune in

my lifetime do make an end of this war. For if I cannot persuade thee rather to do good unto both parties, than to overthrow and destroy the one, preferring love and nature before the malice and calamity of wars, thou shalt see, my son, and trust unto it, thou shalt no sooner march forward to assault thy country, but thy foot shall tread upon thy mother's womb, that brought thee first into this world, for I may not defer to see the day, either that my son be led prisoner in triumph by his natural countrymen, or that he himself do triumph of them, and of his natural country. For if it were so, that my request tended to save thy country, in destroying the Volsces, I must confess thou wouldest hardly and doubtfully resolve on that. For as to destroy thy natural country, it is altogether unmeet and unlawful, so were it not just and less honorable to betray those that put their trust in thee. But my only demand consisteth, to make a gaol delivery of all evils, which delivereth equal benefit and safety, both to the one and the other, but most honorable for the Volsces. For it shall appear, that having victory in their hands, they have of special favor granted us singular graces, peace and amity, albeit themselves have no less part of both than we. Of which good, if so it came to pass, thyself is the only author, and so hast thou the only honor. But if it fail, and fall out contrary, thyself alone deservedly shall carry the shameful reproach and burthen of either party. So, though the end of war be uncertain, yet this, notwithstanding, is most certain, that if it be thy chance to conquer, this benefit shalt thou reap of thy goodly conquest, to be chronicled the plague and destroyer of thy country. And if fortune overthrow thee, then the world will say, that through desire to revenge thy private injuries, thou hast for ever undone thy good friends, who did most lovingly and courteously receive thee.' Martius gave good ear unto his mother's words, without interrupting her speech at all, and after she had said what she would, he held his peace a pretty while, and answered not a word. Hereupon she began again to speak unto him, and said: 'My son, why dost thou not answer me? Dost thou think it good altogether to give place unto thy choler and desire of revenge, and thinkest thou it not honesty for thee to grant thy mother's request in so weighty a cause? Dost thou take it honorable for a nobleman, to remember the wrongs and injuries done him, and dost not in like case think it an honest nobleman's part to be thankful for the goodness that parents do show to their children, acknowledging the duty and reverence they ought to bear unto them? No man living is more bound to show himself thankful in all parts and respects than thyself; who so universally showest all ingratitude. Moreover, my son, thou hast sorely taken of thy country, exacting grievous payments upon them, in revenge of the injuries offered thee; besides, thou hast not hitherto showed thy poor mother any courtesy. And therefore it is not only honest, but due unto me, that without compulsion I should obtain my so just and reasonable request of thee. But since by reason cannot persuade thee to it, to what purpose do I defer my last hope?' And with these words herself, his wife and children, fell down upon their knees before him: Martius seeing that, could refrain no longer, but went straight

and lifted her up, crying out, 'Oh mother, what have you done to me?' And holding her hard by the right hand, 'Oh mother,' said he, 'you have won a happy victory for your country, but mortal and unhappy for your son: for I see myself vanquished by you alone.' These words being spoken openly, he spake a little apart with his mother and wife, and then let them return again to Rome, for so they did request him; and so remaining in the camp that night, the next morning he dislodged, and marched homeward unto the Volsces' country again."

Shakspeare has, in giving a dramatic form to this passage, adhered very closely and properly to the text. He did not think it necessary to improve upon the truth of nature. Several of the scenes in *Julius Cæsar*, particularly Portia's appeal to the confidence of her husband by showing him the wound she had given herself, and the appearance of the ghost of Cæsar to Brutus, are, in like manner, taken from the history.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

This is one of the most loose and desultory of our author's plays: it rambles on just as it happens, but it overtakes, together with some indifferent matter, a prodigious number of fine things in its way. Troilus himself is no character: he is merely a common lover; but Cressida and her uncle Pandarus are hit off with proverbial truth. By the speeches given to the leaders of the Grecian host, Nestor, Ulysses, Agamemnon, Achilles, Shakspeare seems to have known them as well as if he had been a spy sent by the Trojans into the enemy's camp—to say nothing of their being very lofty examples of didactic eloquence. The speech, for instance, commencing,

> "Troy, yet upon her basis, had been down," &c.

is very stately and spirited declamation.

It cannot be said of Shakspeare, as was said of some one, that he was "without o'erflowing full." He was full, even to o'erflowing. He gave heaped measure, running over. This was his greatest fault. He was only in danger "of losing distinction in his thoughts" (to borrow his own expression)

> "As doth a battle when they charge on heaps
> The enemy flying."

There is another passage, the speech of Ulysses to Achilles, showing him the thankless nature of popularity, which has a still greater depth of moral observation and richness of illustration than the former. It is long, but worth the quoting. The

sometimes giving an entire extract from the unacted plays of our author may with one class of readers have almost the use of restoring a lost passage: and may serve to convince another class of critics, that the poet's genius was not confined to the production of stage effect by preternatural means.

"Ulysses. Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for Oblivion;
A great-siz'd monster of ingratitudes:
Those scraps are good deeds past,
Which are devour'd as fast as they are made,
Forgot as soon as done: Persev'rance, dear my lord,
Keeps Honor bright: to have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way;
For Honor travels in a strait so narrow,
Where one but goes abreast; keep then the path,
For Emulation hath a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue; if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forth-right,
Like to an entered tide, they all rush by,
And leave you hindmost;———
Or, like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank,
O'er-run and trampled on: then what do they in present
Tho' less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours;
For time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand,
And with his arms out-stretched, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer: the Welcome ever smiles,
And Farewell goes out sighing. O, let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was; for beauty, wit,
High birth, vigor of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating time:
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gauds,
Tho' they are made and moulded of things past.
The present eye praises the present object.
Then marvel not, thou great and complete man,
That all the Greeks begin to worship Ajax;
Since things in motion sooner catch the eye,
Than what not stirs. The cry went out on thee,
And still it might, and yet it may again,
If thou would'st not entomb thyself alive,
And case thy reputation in thy tent."

The throng of images in the above lines is prodigious; and though they sometimes jostle against one another, they every where raise and carry on the feeling, which is metaphysically true and profound. The debates between the Trojan chiefs on the restoring of Helen are full of knowledge of human motives and character. Troilus enters well into the philosophy of war, when he says, in answer to something that falls from Hector—

> "Why there you touch'd the life of our design:
> Were it not glory that we more affected,
> Than the performance of our heaving spleens,
> I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood
> Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,
> She is a theme of honor and renown,
> A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds."

The character of Hector, in the few slight indications which appear of it, is made very amiable. His death is sublime, and shows in a striking light the mixture of barbarity and heroism of the age. The threats of Achilles are fatal; they carry their own means of execution with them.

> "Come here about me, you my myrmidons,
> Mark what I say.—Attend me where I wheel:
> Strike not a stroke, but keep yourselves in breath;
> And when I have the bloody Hector found,
> Empale him with your weapons round about:
> In fellest manner execute your arms.
> Follow me, sirs, and my proceedings eye."

He then finds Hector and slays him, as if he had been hunting down a wild beast. There is something revolting as well as terrific in the ferocious coolness with which he singles out his prey: nor does the splendor of the achievement reconcile us to the cruelty of the means.

The characters of Cressida and Pandarus are very amusing and instructive. The disinterested willingness of Pandarus to serve his friend in an affair which lies next his heart is immediately brought forward. "Go thy way, Troilus, go thy way; had I a sister were a grace, or a daughter were a goddess, he should take his choice. O admirable man! Paris, Paris is dirt

to him, and I warrant Helen, to change, would give money to boot." This is the language he addresses to his niece: nor is she much behind-hand in coming into the plot. Her head is as light and fluttering as her heart. "It is the prettiest villain, she fetches her breath so short as a new-ta'en-sparrow." Both characters are originals, and quite different from what they are in Chaucer. In Chaucer, Cressida is represented as a grave, sober, considerate personage (a widow—he cannot tell her age, nor whether she has children or no), who has an alternate eye to her character, her interest, and her pleasure. Shakspeare's Cressida is a giddy girl, an unpractised jilt, who falls in love with Troilus, as she afterwards deserts him, from mere levity and thoughtlessness of temper. She may be wooed and won to anything and from anything, at a moment's warning: the other knows very well what she would be at, and sticks to it, and is more governed by substantial reasons than by caprice or vanity. Pandarus again, in Chaucer's story, is a friendly sort of go-between, tolerably busy, officious, and forward in bringing matters to bear; but in Shakspeare he has "a stamp exclusive and professional:" he wears the badge of his trade; he is a regular knight of the game. The difference of the manner in which the subject is treated arises perhaps less from intention, than from the different genius of the two poets. There is no *double entendre* in the characters of Chaucer: they are either quite serious or quite comic. In Shakspeare the ludicrous and ironical are constantly blended with the stately and the impassioned. We see Chaucer's characters as they saw themselves, not as they appeared to others or might have appeared to the poet. He is as deeply implicated in the affairs of his personages as they could be themselves. He had to go a long journey with each of them, and became a kind of necessary confidant. There is little relief, or light and shade, in his pictures. The conscious smile is not seen lurking under the brow of grief or impatience. Everything with him is intense and continuous—a working out of what went before. Shakspeare never committed himself to his characters. He trifled, laughed, or wept with them as he chose. He has no prejudices for or against them; and it seems a matter of perfect indifference whether he shall be in jest or

earnest. According to him, "the web of our lives is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." His genius was dramatic, as Chaucer's was historical. He saw both sides of a question, the different views taken of it according to the different interests of the parties concerned, and he was at once an actor and spectator in the scene. If anything, he is too various and flexible; too full of transitions, of glancing lights, of salient points. If Chaucer followed up his subject too doggedly, perhaps Shakspeare was too volatile and heedless. The Muse's wing too often lifted him off his feet. He made infinite excursions to the right and the left.

> ——— "He hath done
> Mad and fantastic execution,
> Engaging and redeeming of himself
> With such a careless force and forceless care,
> As if that luck, in very spite of cunning,
> Bad him win all."

Chaucer attended chiefly to the real and natural, that is, to the involuntary and inevitable impressions on the mind in given circumstances. Shakspeare exhibited also the possible and the fantastical,—not only what things are in themselves, but whatever they might seem to be, their different reflections, their endless combinations. He lent his fancy, wit, invention, to others, and borrowed their feelings in return. Chaucer excelled in the force of habitual sentiment; Shakspeare added to it every variety of passion, every suggestion of thought or accident. Chaucer described external objects with the eye of a painter, or he might be said to have embodied them with the hand of a sculptor, every part is so thoroughly made out, and tangible:—Shakspeare's imagination threw over them a lustre

> —"Prouder than when blue Iris bends."

Everything in Chaucer has a downright reality. A simile or a sentiment is as if it were given in upon evidence. In Shakspeare the commonest matter-of-fact has a romantic grace about it; or seems to float with the breath of imagination in a freer element. No one could have more depth of feeling or observa-

tion than Chaucer, but he wanted resources of invention to lay open the stores of nature or the human heart with the same radiant light that Shakspeare has done. However fine or profound the thought, we know what was coming, whereas the effect of reading Shakspeare is "like the eye of vassalage encountering majesty." Chaucer's mind was consecutive, rather than discursive. He arrived at truth through a certain process; Shakspeare saw everything by intuition. Chaucer had great variety of power, but he could do only one thing at once. He set himself to work on a particular subject. His ideas were kept separate, labelled, ticketed and parcelled out in a set form, in pews and compartments by themselves. They did not play into one another's hands. They did not re-act upon one another, as the blower's breath moulds the yielding glass. There is something hard and dry in them. What is the most wonderful thing in Shakspeare's faculties is their excessive sociability, and how they gossiped and compared notes together.

We must conclude this criticism; and we will do it with a quotation or two. One of the most beautiful passages in Chaucer's tale is the description of Cresseide's first avowal of her love.

> "And as the new abashed nightingale,
> That stinteth first when she beginneth sing,
> When that she heareth any herdé's tale,
> Or in the hedges any wight stirring,
> And, after, sicker doth her voice outring;
> Right so Cresseide, when that her dread stent,
> Opened her heart, and told him her intent."

See also the two next stanzas, and particularly that divine one beginning

> "Her armés small, her back both straight and soft," &c

Compare this with the following speech of Troilus to Cressida in the play.

> "O, that I thought it could be in a woman:
> And if it can, I will presume in you,

To feed for aye her lamp and flame of love,
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
Out-living beauties out-ward, with a mind
That doth renew swifter than blood decays.
Or, that persuasion could but thus convince me,
That my integrity and truth to you
Might be affronted with the match and weight
Of such a winnow'd purity in love;
How were I then uplifted! But alas,
I am as true as Truth's simplicity,
And simpler than the infancy of Truth."

These passages may not seem very characteristic at first sight, though we think they are so. We will give two, that cannot be mistaken. Patroclus says to Archilles,

——"Rouse yourself; and the weak wanton Cupid
Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold,
And like a dew-drop from the lion's mane
Be shook to air."

Troilus, addressing the god of day on the approach of the morning that parts him from Cressida, says with much scorn,

"What! proffer'st thou thy light here for to sell?
Go, sell it them that smallé selés grave."

If nobody but Shakspeare could have written the former, nobody but Chaucer would have thought of the latter. Chaucer was the most literal of poets, as Richardson was of prose writers.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

This is a very noble play. Though not in the first order of Shakspeare's productions, it stands next to them, and is, we think, the finest of his historical plays, that is, of those in which he made poetry the organ of history, and assumed a certain tone of character and sentiment, in conformity to known facts, instead of trusting to his observations of general nature, or to the unlimited indulgence of his own fancy. What he has added to the history is upon an equality with it. His genius was, as it were, a match for history as well as nature, and could grapple at will with either. This play is full of that pervading comprehensive power by which the poet always seems to identify himself with time and circumstances. It presents a fine picture of Roman pride and Eastern magnificence: and in the struggle between the two, the empire of the world seems suspended, "like the swan's down-feather,

> "That stands upon the swell at full of tide,
> And neither way inclines."

The characters breathe, move, and live. Shakspeare does not stand reasoning on what his characters would do or say, but at once *becomes* them, and speaks and acts for them. He does not present us with groups of stage puppets or poetical machines making set speeches on human life, and acting from a calculation of ostensible motives, but he brings living men and women on the scene, who speak and act from real feelings, according to the ebbs and flows of passion, without the least tincture of the pedantry of logic or rhetoric. Nothing is made out by inference and analogy, by climax and antithesis, but everything takes place just as it would have done in reality, according

to the occasion. The character of Cleopatra is a master-piece What an extreme contrast it affords to Imogen! One would think it almost impossible for the same person to nave drawn both. The Egyptian is voluptuous, ostentatious, conscious, boastful of her charms, haughty, tyrannical, fickle. Her luxurious pomp and gorgeous extravagance are displayed in all their force and lustre, as well as the irregular grandeur of the soul of Mark Antony. Take only the first four lines that they speak as an example of the regal style of love-making.

"CLEOPATRA. If it be love indeed, tell me how much?
ANTONY. There's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd.
CLEOPATRA. I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd.
ANTONY. Then must thou needs find out new heav'n, new earth."

The rich and poetical description of her person, beginning—

"The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burnt on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails, and so perfumed, that
The winds were love-sick"—

seems to prepare the way for, and almost to justify the subsequent infatuation of Antony when, in the sea-fight at Actium, he leaves the battle, and "like a doating mallard" follows her flying sails.

Few things in Shakspeare (and we know of nothing in any other author like them) have more of that local truth of imagination and character than the passage in which Cleopatra is represented conjecturing what were the employments of Antony in his absence. "He's speaking now, or murmuring—*Where's my serpent of old Nile?*" Or again, when she says to Antony, after the defeat at Actium, and his summoning up resolution to risk another fight—"It is my birth-day; I had thought to have held it poor; but since my lord is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra." Perhaps the finest burst of all is Antony's rage after his final defeat, when he comes in, and surprises the messenger of Cæsar kissing her hand—

"To let a fellow that will take rewards,
And say, God quit you, be familiar with,

My play-fellow, your hand; this kingly seal,
And plighter of high hearts."

It is no wonder that he orders him to be whipped; but his low condition is not the true reason: there is another feeling which lies deeper, though Antony's pride would not let him show it, except by his rage; he suspects the fellow to be Cæsar's proxy.

Cleopatra's whole character is the triumph of the voluptuous, of the love of pleasure and the power of giving it, over every other consideration. Octavia is a dull foil to her, and Fulvia, a shrill-tongued shrew. What a picture do those lines give of her—

"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies."

What a spirit and fire in her conversation with Antony's messenger, who brings her the unwelcome news of his marriage with Octavia! How all the pride and beauty of high rank breaks out in her promised reward to him—

——— "There's gold, and here
My bluest veins to kiss!"

She had great and unpardonable faults, but the beauty of her death almost redeems them. She learns from the depth of despair the strength of her affections. She keeps her queen-like state in the last disgrace, and her sense of the pleasurable in the last moments of her life. She tastes a luxury in death. After applying the asp, she says with fondness—

"Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?
As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle.
Oh Antony!"

It is worth while to observe that Shakspeare has contrasted the extreme magnificence of the descriptions in this play with pictures of extreme suffering and physical horror, not less strik-

ing—partly, perhaps, to excuse the effeminacy of Mark Antony, to whom they are related as having happened, but more to preserve a certain balance of feeling in the mind. Cæsar says, hearing of his conduct at the court of Cleopatra,

> ———" Antony,
> Leave thy lascivious wassels. When thou once
> Wert beaten from Mutina, where thou slew'st
> Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
> Did famine follow, whom thou fought'st against,
> Though daintily brought up, with patience more
> Than savages could suffer. Thou did'st drink
> The stale of horses, and the gilded puddle
> Which beast would cough at. Thy palate then did deign
> The roughest berry on the rudest hedge,
> Yea, like the stag, when snow the pasture sheets,
> The barks of trees thou browsed'st. On the Alps,
> It is reported, thou did'st eat strange flesh,
> Which some did die to look on: and all this,
> It wounds thine honor that I speak it now,
> Was borne so like a soldier, that thy cheek
> So much as lank'd not."

The passage after Antony's defeat by Augustus, where he is made to say—

> " Yes, yes; he at Philippi kept
> His sword e'en like a dancer; while I struck
> The lean and wrinkled Cassius, and 't was I
> That the mad Brutus ended "—

is one of those fine retrospections which show us the winding and eventful march of human life. The jealous attention which has been paid to the unities both of time and place, has taken away the principle of perspective in the drama, and all the interest which objects derive from distance, from contrast, from privation, from change of fortune, from long-cherished passion; and contracts our view of life from a strange and romantic dream, long, obscure, and infinite, into a smartly contested three hours' inaugural disputation on its merits by the different candidates for theatrical applause.

The latter scenes of ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA are full of the

changes of accident and passion. Success and defeat follow one another with startling rapidity. Fortune sits upon her wheel more blind and giddy than usual. This precarious state and the approaching dissolution of his greatness are strikingly displayed in the dialogue between Antony and Eros.

"ANTONY. Eros, thou yet behold'st me?
EROS. Ay, noble lord.
ANTONY. Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapor sometime, like a bear or lion,
A towered citadel, a pendant rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon 't, that nod unto the world
And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs,
They are black vesper's pageants.
EROS. Ay, my lord.
ANTONY. That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
As water is in water.
EROS. It does, my lord.
ANTONY. My good knave, Eros, now thy captain is
Even such a body," &c.

This is, without doubt, one of the finest pieces of poetry in Shakspeare. The splendor of the imagery, the semblance of reality, the lofty range of picturesque objects hanging over the world, their evanescent nature, the total uncertainty of what is left behind, are just like the mouldering schemes of human greatness. It is finer than Cleopatra's passionate lamentation over his fallen grandeur, because it is more dim, unstable, unsubstantial. Antony's headstrong presumption, and infatuated determination to yield to Cleopatra's wishes to fight by sea instead of land, meet a merited punishment; and the extravagance of his resolutions, increasing with the desperateness of his circumstances, is well commented upon by Œnobarbus.

——"I see men's judgments are
A parcel of their fortunes, and things outward
Do draw the inward quality after them
To suffer all alike."

The repentance of Œnobarbus after his treachery to his mas-

ter is the most affecting part of the play. He cannot recover from the blow which Antony's generosity gives him, and he dies broken-hearted, "a master-leaver and a fugitive."

Shakspeare's genius has spread over the whole play a richness like the overflowing of the Nile.

HAMLET.

This is that Hamlet the Dane, whom we read of in our youth, and whom we seem almost to remember in our after-years; he who made that famous soliloquy on life, who gave the advice to the players, who thought "this goodly frame, the earth, a steril promontory, and this brave o'er-hanging firmament, the air, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors;" whom "man delighted not, nor woman neither;" he who talked with the grave-diggers, and moralised on Yorick's skull; the school-fellow of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at Wittenberg; the friend of Horatio; the lover of Ophelia; he that was mad and sent to England; the slow avenger of his father's death; who lived at the court of Horwendillus five hundred years before we were born, but all whose thoughts we seem to know as well as we do our own, because we have read them in Shakspeare.

Hamlet is a name: his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is *we* who are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. Whoever has become thoughtful and melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others; whoever has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection, and thought himself "too much i' th' sun;" whoever has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists rising in his own breast, and could find in the world before him only a dull blank with nothing left remarkable in it; whoever has known "the pangs of despised love, the insolence of office, or the spurns which patient merit of the unworthy

takes;" he who has felt his mind sink within him, and sadness cling to his heart like a malady, who has had his hopes blighted and his youth staggered by the apparitions of strange things; who cannot be well at ease, while he sees evil hovering near him like a spectre; whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought; he to whom the universe seems infinite, and himself nothing; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, and who goes to a play as his best resource to drive off, to a second remove, the evils of life by a mock representation of them—this is the true Hamlet.

We have been so used to this tragedy that we hardly know how to criticise it any more than we should know how to describe our own faces. But we must make such observations as we can. It is the one of Shakspeare's plays that we think of oftenest, because it abounds most in striking reflections on human life, and because the distresses of Hamlet are transferred, by the turn of his mind, to the general account of humanity. Whatever happens to him, we apply to ourselves, because he applies it so himself as a means of general reasoning. He is a great moraliser; and what makes him worth attending to is, that he moralises on his own feelings and experience. He is not a common-place pedant. If *Lear* shows the greatest depth of passion, HAMLET is the most remarkable for the ingenuity, originality, and unstudied development of character. Shakspeare had more of the magnanimity or genius than any other poet, and he has shown more of it in this play than in any other. There is no attempt to force an interest: everything is left to time and circumstances. The attention is excited without premeditation or effort, the incidents succeed each other as matters of course, the characters think and speak and act just as they would do if left entirely to themselves. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The observations are suggested by the passing scene—the gusts of passion come and go like sounds of music borne on the wind. The whole play is an exact transcript of what might be supposed to have taken place at the court of Denmark, at the remote period of time fixed upon, before the modern refinements in morals and manners were heard of. It would have been interesting enough to have

been admitted as a bystander in such a scene, at such a time, to have heard and seen something of what was going on. But here we are more than spectators. We have not only "the outward pageants and the signs of grief;" "but we have that within which passes show." We read the thoughts of the heart, we catch the passions living as they rise. Other dramatic writers give us very fine versions and paraphrases of nature: but Shakspeare, together with his own comments, gives us the original text, that we may judge for ourselves. Here, as in all his other works, the poet appears for the time being to be identified with each character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to the other like the same soul, successively animating different bodies. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the very mouth of the person whose name it bears. His plays alone are properly expressions of the passions, not descriptions of them. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors. Each object and circumstance seems to exist in his mind as it existed in nature; each several train of thought and feeling goes on of itself without an effort or confusion; in the world of his imagination everything has a life, a place, and being of its own.

The character of Hamlet is itself a pure effusion of genius. It is not a character marked by strength of passion or will, but by refinement of thought and feeling. Hamlet is as little of the hero as a man can well be: but he is a young and princely novice, full of high enthusiasm and quick sensibility—the sport of circumstances, questioning with fortune, and refining on his own feelings, and forced from the natural bias of his character by the strangeness of his situation. He seems incapable of deliberate action, and is only hurried into extremities on the spur of the occasion, when he has no time to reflect, as in the scene where he kills Polonius, and again, where he alters the letters which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are taking with them to England, purporting his death. At other times when he is most bound to act, he remains puzzled, undecided and sceptical, dallies with his purposes, till the occasion is lost, and always finds some pretence to relapse into indolence and thoughtfulness again.

For this reason he refuses to kill the King when he is at his prayers, and by a refinement in malice, which is in truth only an excuse for his own want of resolution, defers his revenge to some more fatal opportunity, when its object shall be engaged in some act "that has no relish of salvation in it."

He is the prince of philosophical speculators, and because he cannot have his revenge perfect, according to the most refined idea his wish can form, he misses it altogether. So he scruples to trust the suggestions of the Ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof of his uncle's guilt, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his suspicions, and the success of his experiment, instead of acting upon it. Yet he is sensible of his own weakness, taxes himself with it, and tries to reason himself out of it.

"How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast; no more,
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To rust in us unus'd: now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event,—
A thought which quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom,
And ever three parts coward—I do not know
Why yet I live to say, this thing's to do;
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do it. Examples gross as earth excite me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd,
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. 'Tis not to be great,
Never to stir without great argument;
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
When honor's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father killed, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see

> The imminent death of twenty thousand me ,
> That for a fantasy and trick of fame,
> Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
> Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
> Which is not tomb enough and continent
> To hide the slain?—O, from this time forth,
> My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth."

Still he does nothing: and this very speculation on his own infirmity only affords him another occasion for indulging it. It is not for any want of attachment to his father or abhorrence of his murder that Hamlet is thus dilatory, but it is more to his taste to indulge his imagination in reflecting upon the enormity of the crime and refining on his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice. His ruling passion is to think, not to act: and any vague pretence that flatters this propensity instantly diverts him from his previous purposes.

The moral perfection of this character has been called in question by those, we think, who did not understand it. It is more natural than conformable to rules ; and if not more amiable, is certainly more dramatic on that account. Hamlet is not, to be sure, a Sir Charles Grandison. In general the ethical delineations of "that noble and liberal casuist" (as Shakspeare has been well called) do not exhibit the drab-colored quakerism of morality. His plays are not copied either from The Whole Duty of Man, or from The Academy of Compliments! We confess, we are a little shocked at the want of refinement in those who are shocked at the want of refinement in Hamlet. The deficiency of punctilious exactness in his behavior either partakes of the "licence of the time," or belongs to the very excess of intellectual refinement in the character, which makes the common rules of life, as well as his own purposes, sit loose upon him. He may be said to be amenable only to the tribunal of his own thoughts, and is too much occupied with the airy world of contemplation to lay as much stress as he ought on the practical consequences of things. His habitual principles of action are unhinged and out of joint with the time. His conduct to Ophelia is quite natural in his circumstances. It is that of assumed severity only. It is the effect of disappointed hope, of bitter regrets, of affection suspended.

not obliterated, by the distractions of the scene around him. Amidst the natural and preternatural horrors of his situation, he might be excused in delicacy from carrying on a regular courtship. When "his father's spirit was in arms," it was not a time for the son to make love in. He could neither marry Ophelia, nor wound her mind by explaining the cause of his alienation, which he durst hardly trust himself to think of. It would have taken him years to have come to a direct explanation on the point. In the harassed state of his mind, he could not have done otherwise than he did. His conduct does not contradict what he says when he sees her funeral—

> "I lov'd Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
> Could not with all their quantity of love
> Make up my sum."

Nothing can be more affecting or beautiful than the Queen's apostrophe to Ophelia on throwing flowers into the grave:

> ——— "Sweets to the sweet, farewell.
> I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife:
> I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
> And not have strew'd thy grave."

Shakspeare was thoroughly a master of the mixed motives of human character, and he here shows us the Queen, who was so criminal in some respects, not without sensibility and affection in other relations of life.—Ophelia is a character almost too exquisitely touching to be dwelt upon. Oh rose of May, oh flower too soon faded! Her love, her death, are described with the truest touches of tenderness and pathos. It is a character which nobody but Shakspeare could have drawn in the way that he has done, and to the conception of which there is not even the smallest approach, except in some of the old romantic ballads. Her brother, Laertes, is a character we do not like so well: he is too hot and choleric, and somewhat rhodomontade. Polonius is a perfect character in its kind; nor is there any foundation for the objections which have been made to the consistency of this part. It is said that he acts very foolishly and talks very sensibly. There is no inconsistency in that. Again, that he talks wisely

at one time and foolishly at another; that his advice to Laertes is very sensible, and his advice to the King and Queen on the subject of Hamlet's madness very ridiculous. But he gives the one as a father, and is sincere in it; he gives the other as a mere courtier, a busy-body, and is accordingly officious, garrulous, and impertinent. In short, Shakspeare has been accused of inconsistency in this and other characters, only because he has kept up the distinction which there is in nature, between the understandings and the moral habits of men, between the absurdity of their ideas and the absurdity of their motives. Polonius is not a fool, but he makes himself appear one. His folly, whether in his actions or speeches, comes under the head of impropriety of intention.

Hamlet is probably, of all other of Shakspeare's characters, the most difficult to personate on the stage. It is like the attempt to embody a shadow.

> "Come then, the colors and the ground prepare,
> Dip in the rainbow, trick her off in air!
> Chuse a firm cloud, before it falls, and in it
> Catch, ere she change, the Cýnthia of a minute."

Such, nearly, is the task which the actor imposes on himself in the part of Hamlet. It is quite remote from hardness and dry precision. The character is spun to the finest thread, yet never loses its continuity. It has the yielding flexibility of a wave of the sea! It is made up of undulating lines, without a single sharp angle. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The observations are suggested by the passing scene—the gusts of passion come and go, like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The interest depends not on the action, but on the thoughts.

THE TEMPEST.

THERE can be little doubt that Shakspeare was the most universal genius that ever lived. "Either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, scene individable or poem unlimited, he is the only man. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light for him." He has not only the same absolute command over our laughter and our tears, all the resources of passion, of wit, of thought, of observation, but he has the most unbounded range of fanciful invention, whether terrible or playful, the same insight into the world of imagination that he has into the world of reality; and over all there presides the same truth of character and nature, and the same spirit of humanity. His ideal beings are as true and natural as his real characters; that is, as consistent with t' emselves, for if we supposed such beings to exist at all, they could not act, speak, or feel otherwise than as he makes them. He has invented for them a language, manners, and sentiments of their own, from the tremendous imprecations of the witches in *Macbeth*, when they do "a deed without a name," to the sylph-like expressions of Ariel, who "does his spiriting gently;" the mischievous tricks and gossipping of Robin Goodfellow, or the uncouth gabbling and emphatic gesticulations of Caliban in this play.

The TEMPEST is one of the most original and perfect of Shakspeare's productions, and he has shown in it all the variety of his powers. It is full of grace and grandeur. The human and imaginary characters, the dramatic and the grotesque, are blended together with the greatest art and without any appear-

ance of it. Though he has here given "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name," yet that part which is only the fantastic creation of his mind, has the same palpable texture, and coheres "semblably" with the rest. As the preternatural part has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with a sense of truth, the real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream. The stately magician, Prospero, driven from his dukedom, but around whom (so potent is his art) airy spirits throng numberless to do his bidding; his daughter Miranda ("worthy of that name"), to whom all the power of his art points, and who seems the goddess of the isle; the princely Ferdinand, cast by fate upon the haven of his happiness; the delicate Ariel; the savage Caliban, half brute, half demon; the drunken ship's crew—are all connected parts of the story, and could not be spared from the place they fill. Even the local scenery is of a piece and character with the subject. Prospero's enchanted island seems to have risen up out of the sea; the airy music, the tempest-tost vessel, the turbulent waves, all have the effect of the landscape back-ground of some fine picture. Shakspeare's pencil is (to use an allusion of his own) "like the dyer's hand, subdued to what it works in." Everything in him, though it partakes "of the liberty of wit," is also subjected to "the law" of the understanding. For instance, even the drunken sailors share, in the disorder of their minds and bodies, in the tumult of the elements, and seem on shore to be as much at the mercy of chance as they were before at the mercy of the winds and waves. These fellows, with their sea-wit, are the least to our taste of any part of the play: but they are as like drunken sailors as they can be, and are an indirect foil to Caliban, whose figure acquires a classical dignity in the comparison.

The character of Caliban is generally thought (and justly so) to be one of the author's masterpieces. It is not indeed pleasant to see this character on the stage any more than it is to see the god Pan personated there. But in itself it is one of the wildest and most abstracted of all Shakspeare's characters; whose deformity, whether of body or mind, is redeemed by the power and truth of the imagination displayed in it. It is the

essence of grossness, but there is not a particle of vulgarity in it. Shakspeare has described the brutal mind of Caliban in contact with the pure and original forms of nature; the character grows out of the soil where it is rooted, uncontrolled, uncouth, and wild, uncramped by any of the meannesses of custom. It is "of the earth, earthy." It seems almost to have been dug out of the ground, with a soul instinctively superadded to it, answering to its wants and origin. Vulgarity is not natural coarseness, but conventional coarseness, learnt from others, contrary to, or without an entire conformity of natural power and disposition; as fashion is the common-place affectation of what is elegant and refined without any feeling of the essence of it. Schlegel, the admirable German critic on Shakspeare, observes that Caliban is a poetical character, and "always speaks in blank verse." He first comes in thus:—

"CALIBAN. As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen,
Drop on you both: a south-west blow on ye,
And blister you all o'er!
PROSPERO. For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,
Side stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins
Shall for that vast of night that they may work,
All exercise on thee: thou shalt be pinch'd
As thick as honey-combs, each pinch more stinging
Than bees that made 'em.
CALIBAN. I must eat my dinner.
This island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strok'dst me, and mad'st much of me; would'st give me
Water with berries in 't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light and how the less
That burn by day and night; and then I loved thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile:
Curs'd be I that I did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Who first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' th' island."

And again, he promises Trinculo his services thus, if he will free him from his drudgery.

> "I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries,
> I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.
> I pr'ythee let me bring thee where crabs grow,
> And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts:
> Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
> To snare the nimble marmozet: I'll bring thee
> To clust'ring filberds; and sometimes I'll get thee
> Young scamels from the rock."

In conducting Stephano and Trinculo to Prospero's cell, Caliban shows the superiority of natural capacity over greater knowledge and greater folly; and in a former scene, when Ariel frightens them with his music, Caliban to encourage them accounts for it in the eloquent poetry of the senses.

> —"Be not afraid, the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
> Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices,
> That if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Would make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open, and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me: when I wak'd
> I cried to dream again."

This is not more beautiful than it is true. The poet here shows us the savage with the simplicity of a child, and makes the strange monster amiable. Shakspeare had to paint the human animal rude and without choice in its pleasures, but not without the sense of pleasure or some germ of the affections. Master Barnardine, in *Measure for Measure*, the savage of civilized life, is an admirable philosophical counterpart to Caliban.

Shakspeare has, as it were by design, drawn off from Caliban the elements of whatever is ethereal and refined, to compound them in the unearthly mould of Ariel. Nothing was ever more finely conceived than this contrast between the material and the spiritual, the gross and delicate. Ariel is imaginary power, the

swiftness of thought personified. When told to make good speed by Prospero, he says, "I drink the air before me." This is something like Puck's boast on a similar occasion, "I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes." But Ariel differs from Puck in having a fellow feeling in the interests of those he is employed about. How excellent is the following dialogue between him and Prospero!

> "ARIEL. Your charm so strongly works 'em,
> That if you now beheld them, your affections
> Would become tender.
> PROSPERO. Dost thou think so, spirit?
> ARIEL. Mine would, sir, were I human.
> PROSPERO. And mine shall.
> Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
> Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
> One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
> Passion'd as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?"

It has been observed that there is a peculiar charm in the songs introduced in Shakspeare, which, without conveying any distinct images, seem to recall all the feelings connected with them, like snatches of half-forgotten music heard indistinctly at intervals. There is this effect produced by Ariel's songs, which seem to sound in the air, and as if the person playing them were invisible. We shall give one instance out of many of this general power.

"*Enter* FERDINAND; *and* ARIEL *invisible, playing and singing.*

ARIEL'S SONG.

> Come unto these yellow sands,
> And then take hands;
> Curt'sied when you have, and kiss'd
> (The wild waves whist);
> Foot it featly here and there;
> And sweet sprites the burden bear.
> [*Burden dispersedly.*
> Hark, hark! bowgh-wowgh: the watch-dogs bark. Bowgh wowgh.
> ARIEL Hark, hark! I hear

The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry cock-a-doodle-doo.

FERDINAND. Where should this music be? in air or earth?
It sounds no more: and sure it waits upon
Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank
Weeping against the king my father's wreck,
This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air; thence I have follow'd it,
Or it hath drawn me rather:—but 'tis gone.—
No, it begins again.

ARIEL'S SONG.

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made:
Those are pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change,
Into something rich and strange,
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell—
Hark! now I hear them, ding-dong bell.
[*Burden ding-dong.*

FERDINAND. The ditty does remember my drown'd father.
This is no mortal business, nor no sound
That the earth owns: I hear it now above me."

The courtship between Ferdinand and Miranda is one of the chief beauties of this play. It is the very purity of love. The pretended interference of Prospero with it heightens its interest, and is in character with the magician, whose sense of preternatural power makes him arbitrary, tetchy, and impatient of opposition.

The TEMPEST is a finer play than the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which has sometimes been compared with it; but it is not so fine a poem. There are a greater number of beautiful passages in the latter. Two of the most striking in the TEMPEST are spoken by Prospero. The one is that admirable one when the vision which he has conjured up disappears, beginning "The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces," &c., which has been so often quoted, that every school-boy knows it by heart: the other is that which Prospero makes in abjuring his art:

"Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves.
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets, that
By moon-shine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew, by whose aid
(Weak masters tho' ye be) I have be-dimm'd
The noon-tide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green-sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I giv'n fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers; op'd, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and when I have requir'd
Some heav'nly music, which ev'n now I do
(To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for), I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book."

We must not forget to mention among other things in this play, that Shakspeare has anticipated nearly all the arguments on the Utopian schemes of modern philosophy.

'GONZALO. Had I the plantation of this isle, my lord—
ANTONIO. He'd sow 't with nettle seed.
SEBASTIAN. Or docks or mallows.
GONZALO. And were the king on 't, what would I do?
SEBASTIAN. 'Scape being drunk, for want of wine.
GONZALO. I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things: for no kind of traffic
Would I admit: no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; wealth, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation, all men idle, all,
And women too; but innocent and pure:
No sov'reignty.

SEBASTIAN. And yet he would be king on 't.

ANTONIO. The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.

GONZALO. All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun or need of any engine
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all foizon, all abundance
To feed my innocent people!

SEBASTIAN. No marrying 'mong his subjects?

ANTONIO. None, man; all idle; whores and knaves

GONZALO. I would with such perfection govern, sir,
T' excel the golden age.

SEBASTIAN. Save his majesty!"

THE

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

Bottom the Weaver is a character that has not had justice done him. He is the most romantic of mechanics. And what a list of companions he has—Quince the Carpenter, Snug the Joiner, Flute the Bellows-mender, Snout the Tinker, Starveling the Tailor; and then again, what a group of fairy attendants, Puck, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed! It has been observed that Shakspeare's characters are constructed upon deep physiological principles; and there is something in this play which looks very like it. Bottom the Weaver, who takes the lead of

> "This crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
> That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,"

follows a sedentary trade, and he is accordingly represented as conceited, serious and fantastical. He is ready to undertake anything and everything, as if it was as much a matter of course as the motion of his loom and shuttle. He is for playing the tyrant, the lover, the lady, the lion. "He will roar that it shall do any man's heart good to hear him;" and this being objected to as improper, he still has a resource in his good opinion of himself, and "will roar you an 'twere any nightingale." Snug the Joiner is the moral man of the piece, who proceeds by measurement and discretion in all things. You see him with his rule and compasses in his hand. "Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study."

—"You may do it extempore," says Quince, "for it is nothing but roaring." Starveling the Tailor keeps the peace, and objects to the lion and the drawn sword. "I believe we must leave the killing out when all's done." Starveling, however, does not start the objections himself, but seconds them when made by others, as if he had not spirit to express even his fears without encouragement. It is too much to suppose all this intentional: but it very luckily falls out so. Nature includes all that is implied in the most subtle analytical distinctions; and the same distinctions will be found in Shakspeare. Bottom, who is not only chief actor, but stage-manager for the occasion, has a device to obviate the danger of frightening the ladies: "Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the Weaver: this will put them out of fear." Bottom seems to have understood the subject of dramatic illusion at least as well as any modern essayist. If our holiday mechanic rules the roast among his fellows, he is no less at home in his new character of an ass, "with amiable cheeks, and fair large ears." He instinctively acquires a most learned taste, and grows fastidious in the choice of dried peas and bottled hay. He is quite familiar with his new attendants, and assigns them their parts with all due gravity. "Monsieur Cobweb, good Monsieur, get your weapon in your hand, and kill me a red-hipt humble-bee on the top of a thistle, and, good Monsieur, bring me the honey-bag." What an exact knowledge is here shown of natural history!

Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, is the leader of the fairy band. He is the Ariel of the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM; and yet as unlike as can be to the Ariel in *The Tempest*. No other poet could have made two such different characters out of the same fanciful materials and situations. Ariel is a minister of retribution, who is touched with a sense of pity at the woes he inflicts. Puck is a mad-cap sprite, full of wantonness and mischief, who laughs at those whom he misleads—"Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Ariel cleaves the air, and executes his mission with the zeal of a winged messenger; Puck is borne

along on his fairy errand like the light and glittering gossamer before the breeze. He is, indeed, a most Epicurean little gentleman, dealing in quaint devices, and faring in dainty delights. Prospero and his world of spirits are a set of moralists: but with Oberon and his fairies we are launched at once into the empire of the butterflies. How beautifully is the race of beings contrasted with the men and women actors in the scene, by a single epithet which Titania gives to the latter, "the human mortals!" It is astonishing that Shakspeare should be considered, not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but "gorgons and hydras, and chimeras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all other dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said that he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than a poet. His delicacy and sportive gaiety are infinite. In the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM alone, we should imagine, there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range of French poetry put together. What we mean is this, that we will produce out of that single play ten passages, to which we do not think any ten passages in the works of the French poets can be opposed, displaying equal fancy and imagery. Shall we mention the remonstrance of Helena to Hermia, or Titania's description of her fairy train, or her disputes with Oberon about the Indian boy, or Puck's account of himself and his employments, or the Fairy Queen's exhortation to the elves to pay due attendance upon her favorite, Bottom; or Hippolita's description of a chase, or Theseus's answer? The two last are as heroical and spirited as the others are full of luscious tenderness. The reading of this play is like wandering in a grove by moonlight: the descriptions breathe a sweetness like odors thrown from beds of flowers.

Titania's exhortation to the fairies to wait upon Bottom, which is remarkable for a certain cloying sweetness in the repetition of the rhymes, is as follows:—

> "Be kind and courteous to this gentleman
> Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes,
> Feed him with apricocks and dewberries;
> With purple grapes, green figs and mulberries;

The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise:
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes;
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies."

The sounds of the lute and of the trumpe are not more distinct than the poetry of the foregoing passage, and of the conversation between Theseus and Hippolita.

"THESEUS. Go, one of you, find out the forester,
For now our observation is perform'd;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley, go,
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.
We will, fair Queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.
HIPPOLITA. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the boar
With hounds of Sparta; never did I hear
Such gallant chiding. For besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.
THESEUS. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-knee'd and dew-lap'd, like Thessalian bulls,
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never halloo'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge when you hear."

Even Titian never made a hunting-piece of a *gusto* so fresh and lusty, and so near the first ages of the world as this.

It had been suggested to us that the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM would do admirably to get up as a Christmas after-piece; and our prompter proposed that Mr. Kean should play the part of Bottom, as worthy of his great talents. He might, in the dis-

charge of his duty, offer to play the lady like any of our actresses that he pleased, the lover or the tyrant like any of our actors that he pleased, and the lion like "the most fearful wild-fowl living." The carpenter, the tailor, and joiner, it was thought, would hit the galleries. The young ladies in love would interest the side-boxes; and Robin Goodfellow and his compa nions excite a lively fellow-feeling in the children from school. There would be two courts, an empire within an empire, the Athenian and the Fairy King and Queen, with their attendants, and with all their finery. What an opportunity for processions, for the sound of trumpets and glittering of spears! What a fluttering of urchins' painted wings; what a delightful profusion of gauze clouds and airy spirits floating on them!

Alas, the experiment has been tried, and has failed; not through the fault of Mr. Kean, who did not play the part of Bottom, nor of Mr. Liston, who did, and who played it well, but from the nature of things. The MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, when acted, is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime. All that is finest in the play is lost in the representation. The spectacle was grand; but the spirit was evaporated, the genius was fled. Poetry and the stage do not agree well together. The attempt to reconcile them in this instance fails not only of effect, but of decorum. The *ideal* can have no place upon the stage, which is a picture without perspective: everything there is in the fore-ground. That which was merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality. Where all is left to the imagination (as is the case in reading) every circumstance, near or remote, has an equal chance of being kept in mind, and tells according to the mixed impression of all that has been suggested. But the imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the actual impressions of the senses. Any offence given to the eye is not to be got rid of by explanation. Thus Bottom's head in the play is a fantastic illusion, produced by magic spells: on the stage, it is an ass's head, and nothing more; certainly a very strange costume for a gentleman to appear in. Fancy cannot be embodied any more than a simile can be painted; and it is as idle to attempt it as to personate *Wall* or *Moonshine*. Fairies are not

incredible, but fairies six feet high are so. Monsters are not shocking if they are seen at a proper distance. When ghosts appear at mid-day, when apparitions stalk along Cheapside, then may the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM be represented without injury at Covent Garden or at Drury Lane. The boards of a theatre and the regions of fancy are not the same thing.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

ROMEO AND JULIET is the only tragedy which Shakspeare has written entirely on a love-story. It is supposed to have been his first play, and it deserves to stand in that proud rank. There is the buoyant spirit of youth in every line, in the rapturous intoxication of hope, and in the bitterness of despair. It has been said of ROMEO AND JULIET by a great critic, that "whatever is most intoxicating in the odor of a southern spring, languishing in the song of the nightingale, or voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, is to be found in this poem." The description is true; and yet it does not come up to our idea of the play. For if it has the sweetness of the rose, it has its freshness too; if it has the languor of the nightingale's song, it has also its giddy transport; if it has the softness of a southern spring, it is as glowing and as bright. There is nothing of a sickly and sentimental cast. Romeo and Juliet are in love, but they are not ove-sick. Everything speaks the very soul of pleasure, the high and healthy pulse of the passions: the heart beats, the blood circulates and mantles throughout. Their courtship is not an insipid interchange of sentiments lip-deep, learnt at second-hand from poems and plays,—made up of beauties of the most shadowy kind, of "fancies wan," of evanescent smiles and sighs that breathe not, of delicacy that shrinks from the touch, and feebleness that scarce supports itself, an elaborate vacuity of thought, and an artificial dearth of sense, spirit, truth, and nature! It is the reverse of all this. It is Shakspeare all over, and Shakspeare when he was young.

We have heard it objected to ROMEO AND JULIET, that it is founded on an idle passion between a boy and a girl, who have scarcely seen and can have but little sympathy or rational

esteem for one another, who have had no experience of the good or ills of life, and whose raptures or despair must be therefore equally groundless and fantastical. Whoever objects to the youth of the parties in this play as "too unripe and crude" to pluck the sweets of love, and wishes to see a first-love carried on into a good old age, and the passions taken at the rebound, when their force is spent, may find all this done in the *Stranger* and in other German plays, where they do things by contraries, and transpose nature to inspire sentiment and create philosophy. Shakspeare proceeded in a more straightforward, and, we think, more effectual way. He did not endeavor to extract beauty from wrinkles, or the wild throb of passion from the last expiring sigh of indifference. He did not "gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles." It was not his way. But he has given a picture of human life, such as it is in the order of nature. He has founded the passion of the two lovers not on the pleasures they had experienced, but on all the pleasures they had *not* experienced. All that was to come of life was theirs. At that untried source of promised happiness they slaked their thirst, and the first eager draught made them drunk with love and joy. They were in full possession of their senses and their affections. Their hopes were of air, their desires of fire. Youth is the season of love, because the heart is then first melted in tenderness from the touch of novelty, and kindled to rapture, for it knows no end of its enjoyments or its wishes. Desire has no limit but itself. Passion, the love and expectation of pleasure, is infinite, extravagant, inexhaustible, till experience comes to check and kill it. Juliet exclaims on her first interview with Romeo—

> "My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
> My love as deep."

And why should it not? What was to hinder the thrilling tide of pleasure, which had just gushed from her heart, from flowing on without stint or measure, but experience which she was yet without? What was to abate the transport of the first sweet sense of pleasure, which her heart and her senses had just tasted, but indifference, which she was yet a stranger to? What was there to check the ardor of hope, of faith, of constancy, just

rising in her breast, but disappointment which she had not yet felt? As are the desires and hopes of youthful passion, such is the keenness of its disappointments, and their baleful effect. Such is the transition in this play from the highest bliss to the lowest despair, from the nuptial couch to an untimely grave. The only evil that even in apprehension befalls the two lovers is the loss of the greatest possible felicity; yet this loss is fatal to both, for they had rather part with life than bear the thought of surviving all that had made life dear to them. In all this, Shakspeare has but followed nature, which existed in his time, as well as now. The modern philosophy, which reduces the whole theory of the mind to habitual impressions, and leaves the natural impulses of passion and imagination out of the account, had not then been discovered; or, if it had, would have been little calculated for the uses of poetry.

It is the inadequacy of the same false system of philosophy to account for the strength of our earliest attachments, which has led Mr. Wordsworth to indulge in the mystical visions of Platonism in his Ode on the Progress of Life. He has very admirably described the vividness of our impressions in youth and childhood, and how "they fade by degrees into the light of common day," and he ascribes the change to the supposition of a pre-existent state, as if our early thoughts were nearer heaven, reflections of former trails of glory, shadows of our past being. This is idle. It is not from the knowledge of the past that the first impressions of things derive their gloss and splendor, but from our ignorance of the future, which fills the void to come with the warmth of our desires, with our gayest hopes and brightest fancies. It is the obscurity spread before it that colors the prospect of life with hope, as it is the cloud which reflects the rainbow. There is no occasion to resort to any mystical union and transmission of feeling, through different states of being, to account for the romantic enthusiasm of youth; nor to plant the root of hope in the grave, nor to derive it from the skies. Its root is in the heart of man: it lifts its head above the stars. Desire and imagination are inmates of the human breast. The heaven "that lies about us in our infancy" is only a new world, of which we know nothing but what we wish it to be,

and believe it all that we wish. In youth and boyhood, the world we live in is the world of desire, and of fancy: it is experience that brings us down to the world of reality. What is it that in youth sheds a dewey light round the evening star? That makes the daisy look so bright? That perfumes the hyacinth? That embalms the first kiss of love? It is the delight of novelty, and the seeing no end to the pleasure that we fondly believe is still in store for us. The heart revels in the luxury of its own thoughts, and is unable to sustain the weight of hope and love that presses upon it.—The effects of the passion of love alone might have dissipated Mr. Wordsworth's theory, if he means anything more by it than an ingenious and poetical allegory. *That* at least is not a link in the chain let down from other worlds; "the purple light of love" is not a dim reflection of the smiles of celestial bliss. It does not appear till the middle of life, and then seems like "another morn risen on mid day." In this respect the soul comes into the world in utter nakedness. Love waits for the ripening of the youthful blood. The sense of pleasure precedes the love of pleasure, but with the sense of pleasure, as soon as it is felt, come thronging infinite desires and hopes of pleasure, and love is mature as soon as born. It withers and it dies almost as soon!

This play presents a beautiful *coup d'œil* of the progress of human life. In thought it occupies years, and embraces the circle of the affections from childhood to old age. Juliet has become a great girl, a young woman, since we first remember her a little thing in the idle prattle of the nurse. Lady Capulet was about her age when she became a mother, and old Capulet somewhat impatiently tells his younger visitors,

> ——"I've seen the day
> That I have worn a visor, and could tell
> A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear,
> Such as would please: 'tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone"

Thus one period of life makes way for the following, and one generation pushes another off the stage. One of the most striking passages to show the intense feeling of youth in this play is Capulet's invitation to Paris to visit his entertainment.

"At my poor house, look to behold this night
Earth-treading stars that make dark heav'n light;
Such comfort as do lusty young men feel
When well apparel'd April on the heel
Of limping winter treads, even such delight
Among fresh female-buds shall you this nigh
Inherit at my house."

The feelings of youth and of the spring are here blended together like the breath of opening flowers. Images of vernal beauty appear to have floated before the author's mind, in writing this poem, in profusion. Here is another of exquisite beauty, brought in more by accident than by necessity. Montague declares of his son smit with a hopeless passion, which he will not reveal—

" But he, his own affection's counsellor,
Is to himself so secret and so close,
So far from sounding and discovery,
As is the bud bit with an envious worm,
Ere he can spread his sweet leaves to the air;
Or dedicate his beauty to the sun."

This casual description is as full of passionate beauty as when Romeo dwells in frantic fondness on "the white wonder of his Juliet's hand." The reader may, if he pleases, contrast the exquisite pastoral simplicity of the above lines with the gorgeous description of Juliet when Romeo first sees her at her father's house, surrounded by company and artificial splendor.

" What lady's that which doth enrich the hand
Of yonder knight?
O she doth teach the torches to burn bright,
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night,
Like a rich jewel in an Æthiop's ear."

It would be hard to say which of the two garden scenes is the finest, that where he first converses with his love, or takes leave of her the morning after their marriage. Both are like a heaven upon earth; the blissful bowers of Paradise let down upon this lower world. We will give only one passage of these well-known scenes to show the perfect refinement and delicacy of

Shakspeare's conception of the female character. It is wonderful how Collins, who was a critic and a poet of great sensibility, should have encouraged the common error on this subject by saying—"But stronger Shakspeare felt for man alone."

The passage we mean is Juliet's apology for her maiden boldness.

> "Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face;
> Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
> For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.
> Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
> What I have spoke—but farewell compliment:
> Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say, ay,
> And I will take thee at thy word—Yet if thou swear'st,
> Thou may'st prove false; at lovers' perjuries,
> They say Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
> If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully;
> Or if thou think I am too quickly won
> I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay,
> So thou wilt woo: but else not for the world.
> In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond;
> And therefore thou may'st think my 'havior light;
> But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
> Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
> I should have been more strange, I must confess,
> But that thou over-heard'st, ere I was ware,
> My true love's passion; therefore pardon me,
> And not impute this yielding to light love,
> Which the dark night hath so discovered."

In this and all the rest her heart, fluttering between pleasure, hope, and fear, seems to have dictated to her tongue, and "calls true love spoken, simple modesty." Of the same sort, but bolder in virgin innocence, is her soliloquy after her marriage with Romeo.

> "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
> Towards Phœbus mansion; such a waggoner
> As Phaeton would whip you to the west,
> And bring in cloudy night immediately.
> Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night;
> That run-aways' eyes may wink; and Romeo
> Leap to these arms, untalk'd of, and unseen!—
> Lovers can see to do their amorous rites

By their own beauties: or if love be blind,
It best agrees with night.—Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:
Hood my unmann'd blood bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Thinks true love acted, simple modesty.
Come, night!—Come, Romeo! come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.———
Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo: and when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine,
That all the world shall be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.———
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it; and though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day,
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child, that hath new robes,
And may not wear them."

We the rather insert this passage here, inasmuch as we have no doubt it has been expunged from the family Shakspeare. Such critics do not perceive that the feelings of the heart sanctify, without disguising, the impulses of nature. Without refinement themselves, they confound modesty with hypocrisy. Not so the German critic, Schlegel. Speaking of ROMEO AND JULIET, he says, "It was reserved for Shakspeare to unite purity of heart and the glow of imagination, sweetness and dignity of manners and passionate violence, in one ideal picture." The character is indeed one of perfect truth and sweetness. It has nothing forward, nothing coy, nothing affected or coquettish about it;—it is a pure effusion of nature. It is as frank as it is modest, for it has no thought that it wishes to conceal. It reposes in conscious innocence on the strength of its affections. Its delicacy does not consist in coldness and reserve, but in combining warmth of imagination and tenderness of heart with the most voluptuous sensibility. Love is a gentle flame that rarefies and expands her whole being. What an idea of trem-

bling haste and airy grace, borne upon the thoughts of love, does the Friar's exclamation give of her, as she approaches his cell to be married—

> "Here comes the lady. Oh, so light a foot
> Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint:
> A lover may bestride the gossamer,
> That idles in the wanton summer air,
> And yet not fall, so light is vanity"

The tragic part of this character is of a piece with the rest. It is the heroic founded on tenderness and delicacy. Of this kind are her resolution to follow the Friar's advice, and the conflict in her bosom between apprehension and love when she comes to take the sleeping poison. Shakspeare is blamed for the mixture of low characters. If this is a deformity, it is the source of a thousand beauties. One instance is the contrast between the guileless simplicity of Juliet's attachment to her first love, and the convenient policy of the nurse in advising her to marry Paris, which excites such indignation in her mistress. "Ancient damnation! oh most wicked fiend," &c.

Romeo is Hamlet in love. There is the same rich exuberance of passion and sentiment in the one, that there is of thought and sentiment in the other. Both are absent and self-involved, both live out of themselves in a world of imagination. Hamlet is abstracted from everything; Romeo is abstracted from everything but his love, and lost in it. His "frail thoughts dally with faint surmise," and are fashioned out of the suggestions of hope, "the flatteries of sleep." He is himself only in his Juliet; she is his only reality, his heart's true home and idol. The rest of the world is to him a passing dream. How finely is this character portrayed where he recollects himself on seeing Paris slain at the tomb of Juliet!

> "What said my man when my betossed soul
> Did not attend him as we rode? I think
> He told me Paris should have married Juliet."

And again, just before he hears the sudden tidings of her death—

> "If I may trust the flattery of sleep,
> My dreams presage some joyful news at hand

My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne,
And all this day an unaccustom'd spirit
Lifts me above the ground with cheerful thoughts.
I dreamt my lady came and found me dead
(Strange dream! that gives a dead man leave to think)
And breath'd such life with kisses on my lips,
That I reviv'd and was an emperor.
Ah me! how sweet is love itself possess'd,
When but love's shadows are so rich in joy!"

Romeo's passion for Juliet is not a first love: it succeeds and drives out his passion for another mistress, Rosaline, as the sun hides the stars. This is perhaps an artifice (not absolutely necessary) to give us a higher opinion of the lady, while the first absolute surrender of her heart to him enhances the richness of the prize. The commencement, progress, and ending of his second passion are however complete in themselves, not injured, if they are not bettered by the first. The outline of the play is taken from an Italian novel; but the dramatic arrangement of the different scenes between the lovers, the more than dramatic interest in the progress of the story, the development of the characters with time and circumstances, just according to the degree and kind of interest excited, are not inferior to the expression of passion and nature. It has been ingeniously remarked, among other proofs of skill in the contrivance of the fable, that the improbability of the main incident in the piece, the administering of the sleeping-potion, is softened and obviated from the beginning by the introduction of the Friar on his first appearance culling simples and descanting on their virtues. Of the passionate scenes in this tragedy, that between the Friar and Romeo when he is told of his sentence of banishment, that between Juliet and the Nurse when she hears of it, and of the death of her cousin Tybalt (which bear no proportion in her mind, when passion, after the first shock of surprise, throws its weight into the scale of her affections), and the last scene at the tomb, are among the most natural and overpowering. In all of these it is not merely the force of any one passion that is given, but the slightest and most unlooked-for transitions from one to another, the mingling currents of every different feeling rising

up and prevailing in turn, swayed by the master-mind of the poet, as the waves undulate beneath the gliding storm. Thus when Juliet has by her complaints encouraged the Nurse to say, "Shame come to Romeo," she instantly repels the wish, which she had herself occasioned, by answering—

> "Blister'd be thy tongue
> For such a wish, he was not born to shame
> Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit,
> For 'tis a throne where honor may be crown'd
> Sole monarch of the universal earth!
> O, what a beast was I to chide him so!
> NURSE. Will you speak well of him that killed your cousin?
> JULIET. Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?
> Ah, my poor lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,
> When I, thy three-hours' wife, have mangled it?"

And then follows, on the neck of her remorse and returning fondness, that wish treading almost on the brink of impiety, but still held back by the strength of her devotion to her lord, that "father, mother, nay, or both were dead," rather than Romeo banished. If she requires any other excuse, it is in the manner in which Romeo echoes her frantic grief and disappointment in the next scene at being banished from her. Perhaps one of the finest pieces of acting that ever was witnessed on the stage, is Mr. Kean's manner of doing this scene and his repetition of the word *Banished*. He treads close indeed upon the genius of his author.

A passage which this celebrated actor and able commentator on Shakspeare (actors are the best commentators on the poets) did not give with equal truth or force of feeling was the one which Romeo makes at the tomb of Juliet, before he drinks the poison.

> ——— "Let me peruse this face—
> Mercutio's kinsman! noble county Paris!
> What said my man when my betoss'd soul
> Did not attend him as we rode! I think,
> He told me Paris should have marry'd Juliet.
> Said he not so? or did I dream it so?
> Or am I mad, hearing him talk of Juliet,
> To think it was so?———O, give me thy hand,

One writ with me in sour misfortune's book!
I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave——
For here lies Juliet.

* * * * *

——— O, my love! my wife!
Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:
Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips, and in thy cheeks,
And Death's pale flag is not advanced there.——
Tybalt, ly'st thou there in thy bloody sheet?
O, what more favor can I do to thee,
Than with that hand that cut thy youth in twain,
To sunder his that was thine enemy?
Forgive me, cousin! Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair! I will believe
That unsubstantial Death is amorous;
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour.
For fear of that, I will stay still with thee;
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again: here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chamber-maids; O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest;
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last.
Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss,
A dateless bargain to engrossing death!——
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavory guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks, my sea-sick weary bark!
Here's to my love!—[*Drinks.*] O, true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick.—Thus with a kiss I die.

The lines in this speech describing the loveliness of Juliet, who is supposed to be dead, have been compared to those in which it is said of Cleopatra after her death, that she looked "as she would take another Antony into her strong toil of grace;" and a question has been started which is the finest, that we do not pretend to decide. We can more easily decide between Shakspeare and any other author, than between him and himself. Shall we quote any more passages to show his genius or the beauty of ROMEO AND JULIET? At that rate, we might

quote the whole. The late Mr. Sheridan, on being shown a volume of the Beauties of Shakspeare, very properly asked—"But where are the other eleven?" The character of Mercutio in this play is one of the most mercurial and spirited of the productions of Shakspeare's comic muse.

LEAR.

We wish that we could pass this play over, and say nothing about it. All that we can say must fall far short of the subject, or even of what we ourselves conceive of it. To attempt to give a description of the play itself, or of its effects upon the mind, is mere impertinence: yet we must say something. It is then the best of all Shakspeare's plays, for it is the one in which he was the most in earnest. He was here fairly caught in the web of his own imagination. The passion which he has taken as his subject is that which strikes its root deepest into the human heart; of which the bond is the hardest to be unloosed; and the cancelling and tearing to pieces of which gives the greatest revulsion to the frame. This depth of nature, this force of passion, this tug and war of the elements of our being, this firm faith in filial piety, and the giddy anarchy and whirling tumult of the thoughts at finding this prop failing it, the contrast between the fixed, immovable basis of natural affection, and the rapid, irregular starts of imagination, suddenly wrenched from all its accustomed holds and resting-places in the soul, this is what Shakspeare has given, and what nobody else but he could give. So we believe.—The mind of Lear, staggering between the weight of attachment and the hurried movements of passion, is like a tall ship driven about by the winds, buffeted by the furious waves, but that still rides above the storm, having its anchor fixed in the bottom of the sea; or it is like the sharp rock circled by the eddying whirlpool that foams and beats against it, or like the solid promontory pushed from its basis by the force of an earthquake.

The character of Lear itself is very finely conceived for the purpose. It is the only ground on which such a story could be

built with the greatest truth and effect. It is his rash hate, his violent impetuosity, his blindness to everything but the dictates of his passions or affections, that produces all his misfortunes, that aggravates his impatience of them, that enforces our pity for him. The part which Cordelia bears in the scene is extremely beautiful: the story is almost told in the first words she utters. We see at once the precipice on which the poor old king stands from his own extravagant and credulous importunity, the indiscreet simplicity of her love (which, to be sure, has a little of her father's obstinacy in it), and the hollowness of her sisters' pretensions. Almost the first burst of that noble tide of passion, which runs through this play, is in the remonstrance of Kent to his royal master on the injustice of his sentence against his youngest daughter—"Be Kent unmannerly, when Lear is mad!" This manly plainness, which draws down on him the displeasure of the unadvised king, is worthy of the fidelity with which he adheres to his fallen fortunes. The true character of the two eldest daughters, Regan and Gonerill (they are so thoroughly hateful that we do not even like to repeat their names), breaks out in their answer to Cordelia, who desires them to treat their father well—"Prescribe not us our duties"—their hatred of advice being in proportion to their determination to do wrong, and to their hypocritical pretensions to do right. Their deliberate affectation of virtue adds the last finishing to the odiousness of their characters. It is the absence of this detestable quality that is the only relief in the character of Edmund the Bastard, and that at times reconciles us to him. We are not tempted to exaggerate the guilt of his conduct, when he himself gives it up as a bad business, and writes himself down "plain villain." Nothing more can be said about it. His religious honesty in this respect is admirable. One speech of his is worth a million. His father, Gloster, whom he has just deluded with a forged story of his brother Edgar's designs against his life, accounts for his unnatural behavior, and the strange depravity of the times, from the late eclipses in the sun and moon. Edmund, who is in the secret, says when he is gone—"This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeits of our own behavior) we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the

moon, and stars: as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treacherous by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major: so that it follows, I am rough and lecherous. I should have been what I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardising." —The whole character, its careless, light-hearted villainy, contrasted with the sullen, rancorous malignity of Regan and Goneril, its connection with the conduct of the under-plot, in which Gloster's persecution of one of his sons and the ingratitude of another form a counterpart to the mistakes and misfortunes of Lear,—his double amour with the two sisters, and the share which he has in bringing about the fatal catastrophe, are all managed with an uncommon degree of skill and power.

It has been said, and we think justly, that the third act of *Othello*, and the three first acts of LEAR, are Shakspeare's great master-pieces in the logic of passion: that they contain the highest examples not only of the force of individual passion, but of its dramatic vicissitudes and striking effects arising from the different circumstances and characters of the persons speaking. We see the ebb and flow of feeling, its pauses and feverish starts, its impatience of opposition, its accumulating force when it has time to recollect itself, the manner in which it avails itself of every passing word or gesture, its haste to repel insinuation, the alternate contraction and dilatation of the soul, and all "the dazzling fence of controversy" in this mortal combat with poisoned weapons, aimed at the heart, where each wound is fatal. We have seen in *Othello*, how the unsuspecting frankness and impetuous passions of the Moor are played upon and exasperated by the artful dexterity of Iago. In the present play, that which aggravates the sense of sympathy in the reader, and of uncontrollable anguish in the swoln heart of Lear, is the petrifying indifference, the cold, calculating, obdurate selfishness of his daughters. His keen passions seem whetted on their stony hearts. The contrast

would be too painful, the shock too great, but for the intervention of the Fool, whose well-timed levity comes in to break the continuity of feeling when it can no longer be borne, and to bring into play again the fibres of the heart just as they are rigid from over-strained excitement. The imagination is glad to take refuge in the half-comic, half-serious comments of the Fool, just as the mind under the extreme anguish of a surgical operation vents itself in sallies of wit. The character was also a grotesque ornament of the barbarous times, in which alone the tragic ground-work of the story could be laid. In another point of view it is indispensable, inasmuch as while it is a diversion to the too great intensity of our disgust, it carries the pathos to the highest pitch of which it is capable, by showing the pitiable weakness of the old king's conduct and its irretrievable consequences in the most familiar point of view. Lear may well "beat at the gate which let his folly in," after, as the Fool says, "he has made his daughters his mothers." The character is dropped in the third act to make room for the entrance of Edgar as mad Tom, which well accords with the increasing bustle and wildness of the incidents; and nothing can be more complete than the distinction between Lear's real and Edgar's assumed madness, while the resemblance in the cause of their distresses, from the severing of the nearest ties of natural affection, keeps up a unity of interest. Shakspeare's mastery over his subject, if it was not art, was owing to a knowledge of the connecting links of the passions, and their effect upon the mind, still more wonderful than any systematic adherence to rules, and anticipated and outdid all the efforts of the most refined art, not inspired and rendered instinctive by genius.

One of the most perfect displays of dramatic power is the first interview between Lear and his daughter, after the designed affronts upon him, which, till one of his knights reminds him of them, his sanguine temperament had led him to overlook. He returns with his train from hunting, and his usual impatience breaks out in his first words, "Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go, get it ready." He then encounters the faithful Kent in disguise, and retains him in his service; and the first trial of his honest duty is to trip up the heels of the officious Steward, who

makes so prominent and despicable a figure through the piece. On the entrance of Gonerill the following dialogue takes place :—

"Lear. How now, daughter ? what makes that frontlet on ?
Methinks, you are too much of late i' the frown

Fool. Thou wast a pretty fellow, when thou had'st no need to care for her frowning ; now thou art an O without a figure ; I am better than thou art now ; I am a fool, thou art nothing.——Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue ; [*To Gonerill.*] So your face bids me, though you say nothing Mum, mum.

He that keeps nor crust nor crum,
Weary of all, shall want some———

That's a sheal'd peascod ! [*Pointing to Lear.*

Gonerill. Not only, sir, this your all-licens'd fool,
But other of your insolent retinue
Do hourly carp and quarrel ; breaking forth
In rank and not-to-be-endured riots.
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,
To have found a safe redress ; but now grow fearful,
By what yourself too late have spoke and done,
That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance ; which if you should, the fault
Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,
Which in the tender of a wholesome weal,
Might in their working do you that offence
(Which else were shame), that then necessity
Would call discreet proceeding.

Fool. For you trow, nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young.

So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

Lear. Are you our daughter ?

Gonerill. Come, sir,
I would you would make use of that good wisdom
Whereof I know you are fraught ; and put away
These dispositions, which of late transform you
From what you rightly are.

Fool. May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse ?
———Whoop, Jug, I love thee.

Lear. Does any here know me ?——Why this is not Lear ;
Does Lear walk thus ? speak thus ?—Where are his eyes ?
Either his notion weakens, or his discernings
Are lethargy'd. Ha ! waking ?—'Tis not so.——

Who is it that can tell me who I am?—Lear's shadow?
I would learn that: for by the marks
Of sov'reignty, of knowledge, and of reason,
I should be false persuaded I had daughters.——
Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GONERILL. Come, sir:
This admiration is much o' the favor
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright:
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise:
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disorder'd, so debauch'd and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust
Make it more like a tavern, or a brothel,
Than a grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy: be then desir'd
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train;
And the remainder, that shall still depend,
To be such men as may besort your age,
And know themselves and you.

LEAR. Darkness and devils!——
Saddle my horse; call my train together.——
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee:
Yet have I left a daughter.

GONERILL. You strike my people; and your disorder'd rabble
Make servants of their betters.

Enter ALBANY

LEAR. Wo, that too late repents—O, sir, are you come?
Is it your will? speak, sir.—Prepare my horses.——
[*To Albany.*
Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child,
Than the sea-monster!

ALBANY. Pray, sir, be patient.

LEAR. Detested kite! thou liest. [*To Gonerill.*
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know;
And in the most exact regard support
The worships of their name.——O most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
From the fix'd place; drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!

Beat at the gate, that let thy folly in, [*Striking his head.*
And thy dear judgment out!——Go, go, my people.

ALBANY. My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant
Of what hath mov'd you.

LEAR. It may be so, my lord——
Hear, nature, hear! dear goddess, hear!
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful!
Into her womb convey sterility;
Dry up in her the organs of increase;
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honor her! If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen: that it may live,
To be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her!
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,
Turn all her mother's pains, and benefits,
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!——Away, away! [*Exit.*

ALBANY. Now, gods, that we adore, whereof comes this?

GONERILL. Never afflict yourself to know the cause;
But let his disposition have that scope
That dotage gives it.

Re-enter LEAR.

LEAR. What, fifty of my followers at a clap!
Within a fortnight!

ALBANY. What's the matter, sir?

LEAR. I'll tell thee; life and death! I am asham'd
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus:
[*To Gonerill*
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
Should make thee worth them.——Blasts and frogs upon thee
The untented woundings of a father's curse
Pierce every sense about thee!——Old fond eyes
Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck you out;
And cast you, with the waters that you lose,
To temper clay.——Ha! is it come to this?
Let it be so:——Yet have I left a daughter,
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable;
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
She'll flea thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find,
That I'll resume the shape, which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever.

[*Exeunt* LEAR, KENT, *and Attendants.*

This is certainly fine: no wonder that Lear says after it, "O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heavens," feeling its effects by anticipation: but fine as is this burst of rage and indignation at the first blow aimed at his hopes and expectations, it is nothing near so fine as what follows from his double disappointment, and his lingering efforts to see which of them he shall lean upon for support and find comfort in, when both of his daughters turn against his age and weakness. It is with some difficulty that Lear gets to speak with his daughter Regan, and her husband, at Gloster's castle. In concert with Gonerill, they have left their own home on purpose to avoid him. His apprehensions are first alarmed by this circumstance, and when Gloster, whose guests they are, urges the fiery temper of the Duke of Cornwall as an excuse for not importuning him a second time, Lear breaks out,

> "Vengeance! Plague! Death! Confusion!
> Fiery? What fiery quality? Why, Gloster,
> I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife."

Afterwards, feeling perhaps not well himself, he is inclined to admit their excuse from illness, but then recollecting that they have set his messenger (Kent) in the stocks, all his suspicions are roused again, and he insists on seeing them. The scene which ensues is of the higher power. If there is anything in any author like the yearning of the heart, the throes of tenderness, the profound expression of all that can be thought and felt in the most heart-rending situations that it exhibits, we are glad of it; but it is in some author that we have not read.

The scene in the storm, where Lear is exposed to all the fury of the elements, though grand and terrible, is not so fine; but the moralising scenes with mad Tom, Kent, and Gloster, are upon a par with the former. His exclamation in the supposed trial scene of his daughters, "See, the little dogs and all, Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me;" his issuing his orders, "Let them anatomize Regan, see what breeds about her heart;" and his reflection when he sees the misery of Edgar, "Nothing but his unkind daughters could have brought him to this;" are in a style of pathos, where the extremest resources of the imagination are called in to lay open the deepest move-

ments of the heart, which was peculiar to Shakspeare. In the same style and spirit is his interrupting the Fool, who asks, "whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman," by answering "A king, a king!"

The indirect part that Gloster takes in these scenes, where his generosity leads him to relieve Lear and resent the cruelty of his daughters, at the very time that he is himself instigated to seek the life of his son, and suffering under the sting of his supposed ingratitude, is a striking accompaniment to the situation of Lear. Indeed, the manner in which the threads of the story are woven together is almost as wonderful in the way of art as the carrying on the tide of passion, still varying and unimpaired, is on the score of nature. Among the remarkable instances of this kind are Edgar's meeting with his old blind father; the deception he practises upon him when he pretends to lead him to the top of Dover-cliff—"Come on, sir, here's the place," to prevent his ending his life and miseries together; his encounter with the perfidious Stewart, whom he kills, and his finding the letter from Gonerill to his brother upon him, which leads to the final catastrophe, and brings the wheel of Justice "full circle home" to the guilty parties. The bustle and rapid succession of events in the last scenes is surprising. But the meeting between Lear and Cordelia is by far the most affecting part of them. It has all the wildness of poetry, and all the heartfelt true of nature. The previous account of her reception of the news of his unkind treatment, her involuntary reproaches to her sister, "Shame, ladies, shame," Lear's backwardness to see his daughter, the picture of the desolate state to which he is reduced, "Alack, 'tis he; why he was met even now, as mad as the vex'd sea, singing aloud," only prepare the way and heighten our expectation of what follows, and assuredly this expectation is not disappointed when, through the tender care of Cordelia, he revives and recollects her.

"CORDELIA. How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty!
LEAR. You do me wrong, to take me out of the grave:
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead

CORDELIA. Sir, do you know me?
LEAR. You are a spirit I know: when did you die?
CORDELIA. Still, still far wide!
PHYSICIAN. He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.
LEAR. Where have I been? Where am I?—Fair daylight:——
I am mightily abused—I should even die with pity,
To see another thus.—I know not what to say.——
I will not swear these are my hands:—let's see;
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assur'd
Of my condition.
CORDELIA. O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me:——
No, sir, you must not kneel.
LEAR. Pray do not mock me;
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward;
Not an hour more, nor less: and, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you, and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is; and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night: do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.
CORDELIA And so I am, I am!"

Almost equal to this in awful beauty is their consolation of each other when, after the triumph of their enemies, they are led to prison.

"CORDELIA. We are not the first,
Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst.
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.—
Shall we not see these daughters, and these sisters?
LEAR. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask my blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses, and who wins; who's in, who's out;-
And take upon us the mystery of things,

As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs, and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by the moon.
EDMUND. Take them away.
LEAR. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense"

The concluding events are sad, painfully sad; but their pathos is extreme. The oppression of our feelings is relieved by the very interest we take in the misfortunes of others, and by the reflections to which they give birth. Cordelia is hanged in prison by the orders of the bastard Edmund, which are known too late to be countermanded, and Lear dies broken-hearted, lamenting over her.

"LEAR. And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life:
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? O, thou wilt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!——
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir."——

He dies, and indeed we feel the truth of what Kent says on the occasion—

"Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him,
That would upon the rack of this rough world
Stretch him out longer."

Yet a happy ending has been contrived for this play, which is approved of by Dr. Johnson and condemned by Schlegel. A better authority than either, on any subject in which poetry and feeling are concerned, has given it in favor of Shakspeare, in some remarks on the acting of Lear with which we shall conclude this account.

"The LEAR of Shakspeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery with which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements than any actor can be to represent Lear. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passions are terrible as a volcano:

they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that rich sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on ; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage ; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear ;—we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur, which baffles the malice of daughters and storms ; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will on the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks or tones to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of *the heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds them that "they themselves are old!" What gesture shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things? But the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show : it is too hard and stony : it must have love-scenes, and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter, she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the showmen of the scene, to draw it about more easily. A happy ending!—as if the living martyrdom that Lear had gone through,—the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him. If he is to live and be happy after, if he could sustain this world's burden after, why all this pudder and preparation—why torment us with all this unnecessary sympathy? As if the childish pleasure of getting his gilt robes and sceptre again could tempt him to act over again his misused station,—as if at his years and with his experience, anything was left but to die."*

Four things have struck us in reading LEAR :

1. That poetry is an interesting study, for this reason, that

* See an article, called *Theatralia*, in the second volume of the *Reflector*, by Charles Lamb

it relates to whatever is most interesting in human life. Whoever therefore has a contempt for poetry, has a contempt for himself and humanity.

2. That the language of poetry is superior to the language of painting; because the strongest of our recollections relate to feelings, not to faces.

3. That the greatest strength of genius is shown in describing the strongest passions: for the power of the imagination, in works of invention, must be in proportion to the force of the natural impressions, which are the subject of them.

4. That the circumstance which balances the pleasure against the pain in tragedy, is, that in proportion to the greatness of the evil, is our sense and desire of the opposite good excited; and that our sympathy with actual suffering is lost in the strong impulse given to our natural affections, and carried away with the swelling tide of passion, that gushes from and relieves the heart.

RICHARD II.

RICHARD II. is a play little known compared with *Richard III.*, which last is a play that every unfledged candidate for theatrical fame chooses to strut and fret his hour upon the stage in; yet we confess that we prefer the nature and feeling of the one to the noise and bustle of the other; at least, as we are so often forced to see it acted. In RICHARD II., the weakness of the king leaves us leisure to take a greater interest in the misfortunes of the man. After the first act, in which the arbitrariness of his behavior only proves his want of resolution, we see him staggering under the unlooked-for blows of fortune, bewailing his loss of kingly power, not preventing it, sinking under the aspiring genius of Bolingbroke, his authority trampled on, his hopes failing him, and his pride crushed and broken down under insults and injuries, which his own misconduct has provoked, but which he has not courage or manliness to resent. The change of tone and behavior in the two competitors for the throne, according to their change of fortune, from the capricious sentence of banishment passed by Richard upon Bolingbroke, the suppliant offers and modest pretensions of the latter on his return, to the high and haughty tone with which he accepts Richard's resignation of the crown after the loss of all his power, the use which he makes of the deposed king to grace his triumphal progress through the streets of London, and the final intimation of his wish for his death, which immediately finds a servile executioner, is marked throughout with complete effect, and without the slightest appearance of effort. The steps by which Bolingbroke mounts the throne, are those by which Richard sinks into the grave. We feel neither respect nor love for the deposed

monarch; for he is as wanting in energy as in principle: but we pity him, for he pities himself. His heart is by no means hardened against himself, but bleeds afresh at every new stroke of mischance; and his sensibility, absorbed in his own person, and unused to misfortune, is not only tenderly alive to its own sufferings, but without the fortitude to bear them. He is, however, human in his distresses; for to feel pain and sorrow, weakness, disappointment, remorse and anguish, is the lot of humanity, and we sympathize with him accordingly. The sufferings of the man make us forget that he ever was a king.

The right assumed by sovereign power to trifle at its will with the happiness of others as a matter of course, or to remit its exercise as a matter of favor, is strikingly shown in the sentence of banishment so unjustly pronounced on Bolingbroke and Mowbray, and in what Bolingbroke says when four years of his banishment are taken off, with as little reason.

> "How long a time lies in one little word!
> Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
> End in a word: such is the breath of kings."

A more affecting image of the loneliness of a state of exile can hardly be given, than by what Bolingbroke afterwards observes of his having "sighed his English breath in foreign clouds;" or than that conveyed in Mowbray's complaint at being banished for life.

> "The language I have learned these forty years,
> My native English, now I must forego;
> And now my tongue's use is to me no more
> Than an unstringed viol or a harp,
> Or like a cunning instrument cas'd up,
> Or being open, put into his hands
> That knows no touch to tune the harmony.
> I am too old to fawn upon a nurse,
> Too far in years to be a pupil now."—

How very beautiful is all this, and, at the same time, how very *English* too!

Richard II. may be considered as the first of that series of English historical plays, in which "is hung armor of the in-

vincible knights of old," in which their hearts seem to strike against their coats of mail, where their blood .ingles for the fight, and words are but the harbingers of blows. Of this state of accomplished barbarism, the appeal of Bolingbroke and Mowbray is an admirable specimen. Another of these "keen encounters of their wits," which serve to whet the talkers' swords, is where Aumerle answers in the presence of Bolingbroke to the charge which Bagot brings against him, of being an accessory in Gloster's death.

"FITZWATER. If that thy valor stand on sympathies,
There is my gage, Aumerle, in gage to thine;
By that fair sun that shows me where thou stand'st,
I heard thee say, and vauntingly thou spak'st it,
That thou wert cause of noble Gloster's death.
If thou deny'st it twenty times thou liest,
And I will turn thy falsehood to thy heart,
Where it was forged, with my rapier's point.
AUMERLE. Thou dar'st not, coward, live to see the day.
FITZWATER. Now, by my soul, I would it were this hour.
AUMERLE. Fitzwater, thou art damn'd to hell for this.
PERCY. Aumerle, thou liest; his honor is as true,
In this appeal, as thou art all unjust;
And that thou art so, there I throw my gage
To prove it on thee, to th' extremest point
Of mortal breathing. Seize it, if thou dar'st.
AUMERLE. And if I do not, may my hands rot off,
And never brandish more revengeful steel
Over the glittering helmet of my foe.
Who sets me else? By heav'n, I'll throw at all.
I have a thousand spirits in my breast,
To answer twenty thousand such as you.
SURRY. My Lord Fitzwater, I remember well
The very time Aumerle and you did talk.
FITZWATER. My lord, 't is true: you were in presence then:
And you can witness with me, this is true.
SURRY. As false, by heav'n, as heav'n itself is true.
FITZWATER. Surry, thou liest.
SURRY. Dishonorable boy!
That lie shall lie so heavy on my sword,
That it shall render vengeance and revenge
Till thou the lie-giver and that lie rest
In earth as quiet as thy father's skull.
In proof whereof, there is mine honor's pawn:
Engage it to the trial, if thou dar'st.

FITZWATER. How fondly dost thou spur a forward horse:
If I dare eat, or drink, or breathe, or live,
I dare meet Surry in a wilderness,
And spit upon him, whilst I say he lies,
And lies, and lies: there is my bond of faith,
To tie thee to thy strong correction
As I do hope to thrive in this new world,
Aumerle is guilty of my true appeal."

The truth is, that there is neither truth nor honor in all these noble persons: they answer words with words, as they do blows with blows, in mere self-defence: nor have they any principle whatever but that of courage in maintaining any wrong they dare commit, or any falsehood which they find it useful to assert. How different were these noble knights and "barons bold" from their more refined descendants in the present day, who, instead of deciding questions of right by brute force, refer everything to convenience, fashion, and good breeding! In point of any abstract love of truth or justice, they are just the same now that they were then.

The characters of old John of Gaunt, and of his brother York, uncles to the King, the one stern and foreboding, the other honest, good-natured, doing all for the best, and therefore doing nothing, are well kept up. The speech of the former, in praise of England, is one of the most eloquent that ever was penned. We should, perhaps, hardly be disposed to feed the pampered egotism of our countrymen by quoting this description, were it not that the conclusion of it (which looks prophetic) may qualify any improper degree of exultation.

"This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
This earth of Majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-Paradise,
This fortress built by nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
(Or as a moat defensive to a house)
Against the envy of less happy lands.
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,

Fear'd for their breed and famous for their birth,
Renown'd for their deeds, as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son;
This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leas'd out (I die pronouncing it)
Like to a tenement or pelting farm.
England bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious surge
Of wat'ry Neptune, is bound in with shame,
With inky-blots and rotten parchment bonds.
That England, that was wont to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself."

The character of Bolingbroke, afterwards Henry IV., is drawn with a masterly hand:—patient for occasion, and then steadily availing himself of it, seeing his advantage afar off, but only seizing on it when he has it within his reach, humble, crafty, bold, and aspiring, encroaching by regular but slow degrees, building power on opinion, and cementing opinion by power. His disposition is first unfolded by Richard himself, who however is too self-willed and secure to make a proper use of his knowledge.

"Ourself and Bushy, Bagot here and Green,
Observed his courtship of the common people:
How he did seem to dive into their hearts,
With humble and familiar courtesy,
What reverence he did throw away on slaves;
Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles,
And patient under-bearing of his fortune,
As 'twere to banish their affections with him.
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench;
A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,
And had the tribute of his supple knee,
With thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends,
As were our England in reversion his,
And he our subjects' next degree in hope."

Afterwards, he gives his own character to Percy, in these words

"I thank thee, gentle Percy, and be sure

I count myself in nothing else so happy,
As in a soul rememb'ring my good friends;
And as my fortune ripens with thy love,
It shall be still thy true love's recompense."

We know how he afterwards kept his promise. His bold assertion of his own rights, his pretended submission to the king, and the ascendency which he tacitly assumes over him without openly claiming it, as soon as he has him in his power, are characteristic traits of this ambitious and politic usurper. But the part of Richard himself gives the chief interest to the play. His folly, his vices, his misfortunes, his reluctance to part with the crown, his fear to keep it, his weak and womanish regrets, his starting tears, his fits of hectic passion, his smothered majesty, pass in succession before us, and make a picture as natural as it is affecting. Among the most striking touches of pathos are his wish, "O that I were a mockery king of snow, to melt away before the sun of Bolingbroke," and the incident of the poor groom who comes to visit him in prison, and tells him how "it yearned his heart that Bolingbroke upon his coronation day rode on Roan Barbary." We shall have occasion to return hereafter to the character of Richard II. in speaking of Henry VI. There is only one passage more, the description of his entrance into London with Bolingbroke, which we should like to quote here, if it had not been so used and worn out, so thumbed and got by rote, so praised and painted; but its beauty surmounts all these considerations.

"Duchess. My lord, you told me you would tell the rest,
When weeping made you break the story off
Of our two cousins coming into London
York. Where did I leave?
Duchess. At that sad stop, my lord,
Where rude misgovern'd hands, from window tops,
Threw dust and rubbish on king Richard's head.
York. Then, as I said, the duke, great Bolingbroke,
Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed,
Which his aspiring rider seem'd to know,
With slow, but stately pace, kept on his course,
While all tongues cried—God save thee, Bolingbroke.
You would have thought the very windows spake,

So many greedy looks of young and old
Through casements darted their desiring eyes
Upon his visage; and that all the walls,
With painted imag'ry, had said at once—
Jesu preserve thee! welcome Bolingbroke!
Whilst he, from one side to the other turning,
Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck,
Bespake them thus—I thank you, countrymen:
And thus still doing thus he pass'd along.

DUCHESS. Alas, poor Richard! where rides he the while?

YORK. As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
Are idly bent on him that enters next,
Thinking his prattle to be tedious:
Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
Did scowl on Richard; no man cried God save him!
No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home:
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head!
Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off
His face still combating with tears and smiles,
The badges of his grief and patience—
That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd
The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,
And barbarism itself have pitied him."

HENRY IV.

IN TWO PARTS.

If Shakspeare's fondness for the ludicrous sometimes led to faults in his tragedies (which was not often the case) he has made us amends by the character of Falstaff. This is perhaps the most substantial comic character that ever was invented. Sir John carries a most portly presence in the mind's eye; and in him, not to speak it profanely, "we behold the fulness of the spirit of wit and humor bodily." We are as well acquainted with his person as his mind, and his jokes come upon us with double force and relish from the quantity of flesh through which they make their way, as he shakes his fat sides with laughter, or "lards the lean earth as he walks along." Other comic characters seem, if we approach and handle them, to resolve themselves into air, "into thin air;" but this is embodied and palpable to the grossest apprehension: it lies "three fingers deep upon the ribs," it plays about the lungs and the diaphragm with all the force of animal enjoyment. His body is like a good estate to his mind, from which he receives rents and revenues of profit and pleasure in kind, according to its extent, and the richness of the soil. Wit is often a meagre substitute for pleasurable sensation; an effusion of spleen and petty spite at the comforts of others, from feeling none in itself. Falstaff's wit is an emanation of a fine constitution; an exuberance of good-humor and good-nature; an overflowing of his love of laughter and good-fellowship; a giving vent to his heart's ease and over-contentment with himself and others. He would not be in character, if he were not so fat as he is; for there is the greatest keeping

in the boundless luxury of his imagination and the pampered self-indulgence of his physical appetites. He manures and nourishes his mind with jests, as he does his body with sack and sugar. He carves out his jokes, as he would a capon, or a haunch of venison, where there is *cut and come again;* and pours out upon them the oil of gladness. His tongue drops fatness, and in the chambers of his brain "it snows of meat and drink." He keeps up perpetual holiday and open house, and we live with him in a round of invitations to a rump and dozen.— Yet we are not to suppose that he was a mere sensualist. All this is as much in imagination as in reality. His sensuality does not engross and stupify his other faculties, but "ascends me into the brain, clears away all the dull, crude vapors that environ it, and makes it full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes." His imagination keeps up the ball after his senses have done with it. He seems to have even a greater enjoyment of the freedom from restraint, of good cheer, of his ease, of his vanity, in the ideal exaggerated descriptions which he gives of them, than in fact. He never fails to enrich his discourse with allusions to eating and drinking, but we never see him at table. He carries his own larder about with him, and he is himself "a tun of man." His pulling out the bottle in the field of battle is a joke to show his contempt for glory accompanied with danger, his systematic adherence to his Epicurean philosophy in the most trying circumstances. Again, such is his deliberate exaggeration of his own vices, that it does not seem quite certain whether the account of his hostess's bill, found in his pocket, with such an out-of-the-way charge for capons and sack with only one halfpenny-worth of bread, was not put there by himself as a trick to humor the jest upon his favorite propensities, and as a conscious caricature of himself. He is represented as a liar, a braggart, a coward, a glutton, &c., and yet we are not offended but delighted with him; for he is all these as much to amuse others as to gratify himself. He openly assumes all these characters to show the humorous part of them. The unrestrained indulgence of his own ease, appetites, and convenience, has neither malice nor hypocrisy in it In a word, he is an actor in himself almost as

much as upon the stage, and we no more object to the character of Falstaff in a moral point of view than we should think of bringing an excellent comedian, who should represent him to the life, before one of the police offices. We only consider the number of pleasant lights in which he puts certain foibles (the more pleasant as they are opposed to the received rules and necessary restraints of society) and do not trouble ourselves about the consequences resulting from them, for no mischievous consequences do result. Sir John is old as well as fat, which gives a melancholy retrospective tinge to the character; and by the disparity between his inclinations and his capacity for enjoyment, makes it still more ludicrous and fantastical.

The secret of Falstaff's wit is for the most part a masterly presence of mind, an absolute self-possession, which nothing can disturb. His repartees are involuntary suggestions of his self-love; instinctive evasions of everything that threatens to interrupt the career of his triumphant jollity and self-complacency. His very size floats him out of all his difficulties in a sea of rich conceits; and he turns round on the pivot of his convenience, with every occasion and at a moment's warning. His natural repugnance to every unpleasant thought or circumstance of itself makes light of objections, and provokes the most extravagant and licentious answers in his own justification. His indifference to truth puts no check upon his invention, and the more improbable and unexpected his contrivances are, the more happily does he seem to be delivered of them, the anticipation of their effect acting as a stimulus to the gaiety of his fancy. The success of one adventurous sally gives him spirits to undertake another: he deals always in round numbers, and his exaggerations and excuses are "open, palpable, monstrous as the father that begets them." His dissolute carelessness of what he says discovers itself in the first dialogue with the Prince.

"FALSTAFF. By the lord, thou say'st true, lad; and is not mine hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench?

P. HENRY. As the honey of Hibla, my old lad of the castle; and is not a buff-jerkin a most sweet robe of durance?

FALSTAFF. How now, how now, mad wag, what, in thy quips and thy quiddities? what a plague have I to do with a buff-jerkin?

P. HENRY. Why, what a pox have I to do with mine hostess of the tavern?"

In the same scene he afterwards affects melancholy, from pure satisfaction of heart, and professes reform, because it is the farthest thing in the world from his thoughts. He has no qualms of conscience, and therefore would as soon talk of them as of anything else when the humor takes him.

"FALSTAFF. But Hal, I pr'ythee trouble me no more with vanity. I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought: an old lord of council rated me the other day in the street about you, sir; but I mark'd him not, and yet he talked very wisely, and in the street too.

P. HENRY. Thou didst well, for wisdom cries out in the street, and no man regards it.

FALSTAFF. O, thou hast damnable iteration, and art indeed able to corrupt a saint. Thou hast done much harm unto me, Hal, God forgive thee for it. Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing, and now I am, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked. I must give over this life, and I will give it over, by the lord; an I do not, I am a villain. I'll be damn'd for never a king's son in Christendom.

P. HENRY. Where shall we take a purse to-morrow, Jack?

FALSTAFF. Where thou wilt, lad, I'll make one; an I do not, call me villain, and baffle me.

P. HENRY. I see good amendment of life in thee, from praying to purse-taking.

FALSTAFF. Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal. 'Tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation."

Of the other prominent passages, his account of his pretended resistance to the robbers, "who grew from four men in buckram into eleven" as the imagination of his own valor increased with his relating it, his getting off when the truth is discovered by pretending he knew the Prince, the scene in which in the person of the old king he lectures the prince and gives himself a good character, the soliloquy on honor, and description of his new-raised recruits, his meeting with the chief justice, his abuse of the Prince and Poins, who overhear him, to Doll Taresheet, his reconciliation with Mrs. Quickly who has arrested him for an old debt, and whom he persuades to pawn her plate to lend him ten pounds more, and the scenes with Shallow and Silence, are

all inimitable. Of all of them, the scene in which Falstaff plays the part, first, of the King, and then of Prince Henry, is the one that has been the most often quoted. We must quote it once more in illustration of our remarks.

"Falstaff. Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art accompanied: for though the camomile, the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted, the sooner it wears. That thou art my son, I have partly thy mother's word, partly my own opinion; but chiefly, a villainous trick of thine eye, and a foolish hanging of thy nether lip, that doth warrant me. If then thou be son to me, here lies the point;——Why, being son to me, art thou so pointed at? Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a micher, and eat blackberries? a question not to be ask'd. Shall the son of England prove a thief, and take purses? a question not to be ask'd. There is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of, and it is known to many in our land by the name of pitch: this pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth defile; so doth the company thou keepest: for Harry, now I do not speak to thee in drink, but in tears; not in pleasure, but in passion; not in words only, but in woes also:—and yet there is a virtuous man, whom I have often noted in thy company, but I know not his name.

P. Henry. What manner of man, an it like your majesty?

Falstaff. A goodly portly man, i' faith, and a corpulent; of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye, and a most noble carriage; and, as I think, his age some fifty, or, by'r-lady, inclining to threescore; and now I do remember me, his name is Falstaff: if that man should be lewdly given, he deceiveth me; for, Harry, I see virtue in his looks. If then the fruit may be known by the tree, as the tree by the fruit, then peremptorily I speak it, there is virtue in that Falstaff: him keep with, the rest banish. And tell me now, thou naughty varlet, tell me, where hast thou been this month?

P. Henry. Dost thou speak like a king? Do thou stand for me, and I'll play my father.

Falstaff. Depose me? if thou dost it half so gravely, so majestically, both in word and matter, hang me up by the heels for a rabbit-sucker, or a poulterer's hare.

P. Henry. Well, here I am set.

Falstaff. And here I stand:—judge, my masters.

P. Henry. Now, Harry, whence come you?

Falstaff. My noble lord, from Eastcheap.

P. Henry. The complaints I hear of thee are grievous

Falstaff. S'blood, my lord, they are false:—nay, I'll tickle ye for a young prince, i' faith.

P. Henry. Swearest thou, ungracious boy? henceforth ne'er look on me. Thou art violently carried away from grace: there is a devil haunts thee, in the likeness of a fat old man; a tun of man is thy companion. Why

dost thou converse with that trunk of humors, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swoln parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuft cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manning-tree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that grey iniquity, that father ruffian, that vanity in years? wherein is he good, but to taste sack and drink it? wherein neat and cleanly, but to carve a capon and eat it? wherein cunning, but in craft? wherein crafty, but in villainy? wherein villainous, but in all things? wherein worthy, but in nothing?

FALSTAFF. I would your grace would take me with you, whom means your grace?

P. HENRY. That villainous, abominable mis-leader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan.

FALSTAFF. My lord, the man I know.

P. HENRY I know thou dost.

FALSTAFF. But to say, I know more harm in him than in myself, were to say more than I know. That he is old (the more the pity), his white hairs do witness it: but that he is (saving your reverence) a whore-master, that I utterly deny. If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked! if to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned: if to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved. No, my good lord; banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins: but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company; banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.

P. HENRY. I do, I will.

[*Knocking; and Hostess and Bardolph go out.*

Re-enter BARDOLPH, *running.*

BARDOLPH. O, my lord, my lord; the sheriff, with a most monstrous watch, is at the door.

FALSTAFF. Out, you rogue! play out the play: I have much to say in the behalf of that same Falstaff."

One of the most characteristic descriptions of Sir John is that which Mrs. Quickly gives of him when he asks her "What is the gross sum that I owe thee?"

"HOSTESS. Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself, and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin-chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire on Wednesday in Whitsun-week, when the prince broke thy head for likening his father to a singing man of Windsor; thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me, and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher's wife, come in then, and call

me gossip Quickly? coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar; telling us she had a good dish of prawns; whereby thou didst desire to eat some; whereby I told thee, they were ill for a green wound? And didst thou not, when she was gone down stairs, desire me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people; saying, that ere long they should call me madam? And didst thou not kiss me, and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath; deny it if thou canst."

This scene is to us the most convincing proof of Falstaff's power of gaining over the good will of those he was familiar with, except indeed Bardolph's somewhat profane exclamation on hearing the account of his death, "Would I were with him, wheresoe'er he is, whether in heaven or hell."

One of the topics of exulting superiority over others most common in Sir John's mouth, is his corpulence, and the exterior marks of good living which he carries about him, thus "turning his vices into commodity." He accounts for the friendship between the Prince and Poins, from "their legs being both of a bigness;" and compares Justice Shallow to "a man made after supper of a cheese-paring." There cannot be a more striking gradation of character than that between Falstaff and Shallow, and Shallow and Silence. It seems difficult at first to fall lower than the squire; but this fool, great as he is, finds an admirer and humble foil in his cousin Silence. Vain of his acquaintance with Sir John, who makes a butt of him, he exclaims, "Would, cousin Silence, that thou had'st seen that which this knight and I have seen!"—"Ay, Master Shallow, we have heard the chimes at midnight," says Sir John. To Falstaff's observation, "I did not think Master Silence had been a man of this mettle," Silence answers, "Who, I? I have been merry twice and once ere now." What an idea is here conveyed of a prodigality of living? What good husbandry and economical self-denial in his pleasures? What a stock of lively recollections? It is curious that Shakspeare has ridiculed in Justice Shallow, who was "in some authority under the king," that disposition to unmeaning tautology which is the regal infirmity of later times, and which, it may be supposed, he acquired from talking to his cousin Silence, and receiving no answers.

"Falstaff. You have here a goodly dwelling, and a rich.

Shallow. Barren, barren, barren; beggars all, beggars all, Sir John marry, good air. Spread Davy, spread Davy. Well said, Davy.

Falstaff. This Davy serves you for good uses.

Shallow. A good varlet, a good varlet, a very good varlet. By the mass, I have drank too much sack at supper. A good varlet. Now sit down, now sit down. Come, cousin."

The true spirit of humanity, the thorough knowledge of the stuff we are made of, the practical wisdom, with the seeming fooleries in the whole of the garden-scene at Shallow's country-seat, and just before, in the exquisite dialogue between him and Silence on the death of old Double, have no parallel anywhere else. In one point of view they are laughable in the extreme; in another they are equally affecting, if it is affecting to show *what a little thing is human life*, what a poor forked creature man is!

The heroic and serious part of these two plays, founded on the story of Henry IV., is not inferior to the comic and farcical. The characters of Hotspur and Prince Henry are two of the most beautiful and dramatic, both in themselves and from contrast, that ever were drawn. They are the essence of chivalry. We like Hotspur the best, upon the whole, perhaps because he was unfortunate. The characters of their fathers, Henry IV. and old Northumberland, are kept up equally well. Henry naturally succeeds by his prudence and caution in keeping what he has got; Northumberland fails in his enterprise from an excess of the same quality, and is caught in the web of his own cold, dilatory policy. Owen Glendower is a masterly character. It is as bold and original as it is intelligible and thoroughly natural. The disputes between him and Hotspur are managed with infinite address and insight into nature. We cannot help pointing out here some very beautiful lines, where Hotspur describes the fight between Glendower and Mortimer.

——"When on the gentle Severn's sedgy bank,
In single opposition hand to hand,
He did confound the best part of an hour
In changing hardiment with great Glendower;
Three times they breath'd, and three times did they drink,
Upon agreement, of swift Severn's flood;

Who then affrighted with their bloody looks,
Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
And hid his crisp head in the hollow bank,
Blood-stained with these valiant combatants."

The peculiarity and the excellence of Shakspeare's poetry is, that it seems as if he made his imagination the hand-maid of nature, and nature the plaything of his imagination. He appears to have been all the characters, and in all the situations he describes. It is as if either he had had all their feelings, or had lent them all his genius to express themselves. There cannot be stronger instances of this than Hotspur's rage when Henry IV. forbids him to speak of Mortimer, his insensibility to all that his father and uncle urge to calm him, and his fine abstracted apostrophe to honor, "By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap to pluck bright honor from the moon," &c. After all, notwithstanding the gallantry, generosity, good temper, and idle freaks of the mad-cap Prince of Wales, we should not have been sorry, if Northumberland's force had come up in time to decide the fate of the battle at Shrewsbury; at least, we always heartily sympathize with Lady Percy's grief, when she exclaims,

"Had my sweet Harry had but half their numbers,
To-day might I (hanging on Hotspur's neck)
Have talked of Monmouth's grave."

The truth is, that we never could forgive the Prince's treatment of Falstaff; though, perhaps, Shakspeare knew what was best, according to the history, the nature of the times, and of the man. We speak only as dramatic critics. Whatever terror the French in those days might have of Henry V., yet, to the readers of poetry, at present, Falstaff is the better man of the two. We think of him, and quote him oftener.

HENRY V.

Henry V. is a very favorite monarch with the English nation, and he appears to have been also a favorite with Shakspeare, who labors hard to apologise for the actions of the king, by showing us the character of the man, as "the king of good fellows." He scarcely deserves this honor. He was fond of war and low company: we know little else of him. He was careless, dissolute, and ambitious; idle, or doing mischief. In private, he seemed to have no idea of the common decencies of life, which he subjected to a kind of regal license; in public affairs, he seemed to have no idea of any rule of right or wrong, but brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy and archi-episcopal advice. His principles did not change with his situation and professions. His adventure on Gadshill was a prelude to the affair of Agincourt, only a bloodless one; Falstaff was a puny prompter of violence and outrage, compared with the pious and politic Archbishop of Canterbury, who gave the king *carte blanche*, in a genealogical tree of his family, to rob and murder in circles of latitude and longitude abroad—to save the possessions of the church at home. This appears in the speeches in Shakspeare, where the hidden motives that actuate princes and their advisers in war and policy are better laid open than in speeches from the throne or woolsack. Henry, because he did not know how to govern his own kingdom, determined to make war upon his neighbors. Because his own title to the crown was doubtful, he laid claim to that of France. Because he did not know how to exercise the enormous power which had just dropped into his hands, to any one good purpose, he immediately undertook (a cheap and obvious resource of sovereignty)

to do all the mischief he could. Even if absolute monarchs had the wit to find out objects of laudable ambition, they could only "plume up their wills" in adhering to the more sacred formula of the royal prerogative, "the right divine of kings to govern wrong," because will is only then triumphant when it is opposed to the will of others, because the pride of power is only then shown, not when it consults the rights and interests of others, but when it insults and tramples on all justice and all humanity. Henry declares his resolution "when France is his, to bend it to his awe, or break it all to pieces"—a resolution worthy of a conqueror, to destroy all that he cannot enslave; and what adds to the joke, he lays all the blame of the consequences of his ambition on those who will not submit tamely to his tyranny. Such is the history of kingly power, from the beginning to the end of the world; with this difference, that the object of war formerly, when the people adhered to their allegiance, was to depose kings; the object latterly, since the people swerved from their allegiance, has been to restore kings, and to make common cause against mankind. The object of our late invasion and conquest of France was to restore the legitimate monarch, the descendant of Hugh Capet, to the throne: Henry V., in his time, made war on and deposed the descendant of this very Hugh Capet, on the plea that he was a usurper and illegitimate. What would the great modern catspaw of legitimacy, and restorer of divine right, have said to the claim of Henry, and the title of the descendants of Hugh Capet? Henry V., it is true, was a hero, a king of England, and the conqueror of the king of France. Yet, we feel little love or admiration for him. He was a hero; that is, he was ready to sacrifice his own life for the pleasure of destroying thousands of other lives: he was a king of England, but not a constitutional one, and we only like kings according to the law; lastly, he was a conqueror of the French king, and for this we dislike him less than if he had conquered the French people. How then do we like him? We like him in the play. There he is a very amiable monster, a very splendid pageant. As we like to gaze at a panther, or a young lion, in their cages in the Tower, and catch a pleasing horror from their glistening eyes, their velvet paws, and dreadful

roar, so we take a very romantic, heroic, patriotic, and poetical delight in the boasts and feats of our younger Harry, as they appear on the stage, and are confined to lines of ten syllables; where no blood follows the stroke that wounds our ears, where no harvest bends beneath horses' hoofs, no city flames, no little child is butchered, no dead men's bodies are found piled on heaps and festering the next morning—in the orchestra!

So much for the politics of this play; now for the poetry. Perhaps one of the most striking images in all Shakspeare is that given of war in the first lines of the Prologue.

> "O for a muse of fire that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention,
> A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
> And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
> Then should the warlike Harry, like himself,
> Assume the port of Mars, and *at his heels*
> *Leash'd in, like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire,*
> *Crouch for employment.*"

Rubens, if he had painted it, would not have improved upon this simile.

The conversation between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely, relating to the sudden change in the manners of Henry V., is among the well-known *Beauties* of Shakspeare. It is indeed admirable both for strength and grace. It has sometimes occurred to us that Shakspeare, in describing "the reformation" of the prince, might have had an eye to himself—

> "Which is a wonder how his grace should glean it,
> Since his addiction was to courses vain
> His companies unletter'd, rude and shallow,
> His hours fill'd up with riots, banquets, sports;
> And never noted in him any study,
> Any retirement, any sequestration
> From open haunts and popularity.
>
> ELY. The strawberry grows underneath the nettle,
> And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
> Neighbor'd by fruit of baser quality:
> And so the prince obscur'd his contemplation
> Under the veil of wildness, which no doubt

Grew like the summer-grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty."

This at least is as probable an account of the progress of the poet's mind as we have met with in any of the Essays on the Learning of Shakspeare.

Nothing can be better managed than the caution which the king gives the meddling archbishop, not to advise him rashly to engage in the war with France, his scrupulous dread of the consequences of that advice, and his eager desire to hear and follow it.

"And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,
That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,
Or nicely charge your understanding soul
With opening titles miscreate, whose right
Suits not in native colors with the truth,
For God doth know how many now in health
Shall drop their blood, in approbation
Of what your reverence shall incite us to.
Therefore take heed how you impawn your person,
How you awake our sleeping sword of war;
We charge you in the name of God, take heed.
For never two such kingdoms did contend
Without much fall of blood, whose guiltless drops
Are every one a wo, a sore complaint
'Gainst him, whose wrong gives edge unto the swords
That make such waste in brief mortality.
Under this conjuration, speak, my lord;
For we will hear, note, and believe in heart,
That what you speak, is in your conscience wash'd,
As pure as sin with baptism."

Another characteristic instance of the blindness of human nature to everything but its own interests is the complaint made by the king of "the ill-neighborhood" of the Scot in attacking England when she was attacking France.

"For once the eagle England being in prey,
To her unguarded nest the weazel Scot
Comes sneaking, and so sucks her princely eggs.

It is worth observing that in all these plays, which give an admirable picture of the spirit of the *good old times*, the moral inference does not at all depend upon the nature of the actions, but on the dignity or meanness of the persons committing them. "The eagle England" has a right "to be in prey," but "the weazel Scot" has none "to come sneaking to her nest," which she has left to pounce upon others. Might was right, without equivocation or disguise, in that heroic and chivalrous age. The substitution of right for might, even in theory, is among the refinements and abuses of modern philosophy.

A more beautiful rhetorical delineation of the effects of subordination in a commonwealth can hardly be conceived than the following :—

> "For government, though high and low and lower,
> Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,
> Congruing in a full and natural close,
> Like music.
> ——Therefore heaven doth divide
> The state of man in divers functions,
> Setting endeavor in continual motion;
> To which is fixed, as an aim or butt,
> Obedience: for so work the honey bees;
> Creatures that by a rule in nature, teach
> The art of order to a peopled kingdom.
> They have a king, and officers of sorts
> Where some, like magistrates, correct at home;
> Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad;
> Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
> Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds;
> Which pillage they with merry march bring home
> To the tent-royal of their emperor;
> Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
> The singing mason building roofs of gold,
> The civil citizens kneading up the honey,
> The poor mechanic porters crowding in
> Their heavy burthens at his narrow gate;
> The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum,
> Delivering o'er to executors pale
> The lazy yawning drone. I this infer,
> That many things, having full reference
> To one consent, may work contrariously;
> As many arrows, loosed several ways,

Come to one mark; as many ways meet in one town;
As many fresh streams meet in one salt sea;
As many lines close in the dial's centre;
So may a thousand actions, once a-foot,
End in one purpose, and be all well borne
Without defeat."

HENRY V. is but one of Shakspeare's second-rate plays. Yet by quoting passages, like this, from his second-rate plays alone, we might make a volume "rich with his praise,"

"As is the oozy bottom of the sea
With sunken wrack and sumless treasuries."

Of this sort are the king's remonstrance to Scroop, Grey, and Cambridge, on the detection of their treason, his address to the soldiers at the siege of Harfleur, and the still finer one before the battle of Agincourt, the description of the night before the battle, and the reflections on ceremony put into the mouth of the king.

"O hard condition; twin-born with greatness,
Subjected to the breath of every fool,
Whose sense no more can feel but his own wringing!
What infinite heart's ease must kings neglect,
That private men enjoy! and what have kings,
That privates have not too, save ceremony?
Save general ceremony?
And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more
Of mortal griefs, than do thy worshippers?
What are thy rents? what are thy comings-in?
O ceremony, show me but thy worth!
What is thy soul, O adoration?
Art thou aught else but place, degree, and form,
Creating awe and fear in other men?
Wherein thou art less happy, being feared,
Than they in fearing.
What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,
But poison'd flattery? O, be sick, great greatness,
And bid thy ceremony give thee cure!
Think'st thou, the fiery fever will go out
With titles blown from adulation?

Will it give place to flexure and low bending!
Can'st thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee,
Command the health of it? No, thou proud dream,
That play'st so subtly with a king's repose,
I am a king, that find thee: and I know,
'Tis not the balm, the sceptre, and the ball,
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
The inter-tissu'd robe of gold and pearl,
The farsed title running 'fore the king,
The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
That beats upon the shore of the world:
No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony:
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave;
Who with a body fill'd, and vacant mind,
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread.
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell:
But, like a lacquey, from the rise to set,
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night
Sleeps in Elysium; next day, after dawn,
Doth rise, and help Hyperion to his horse;
And follows so the ever-running year
With profitable labor, to his grave:
And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,
Winding up days with toil, and nights with sleep,
Has the forehand and vantage of a king.
The slave, a member of the country's peace,
Enjoys it; but in gross brain little wots
What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,
Whose hours the peasant best advantages."

Most of these passages are well known: there is one, which we do not remember to have seen noticed, and yet it is no whit inferior to the rest in heroic beauty. It is the account of the deaths of York and Suffolk.

"EXETER. The Duke of York commends him to your majesty.
K. HENRY. Lives he, good uncle? Thrice within this hour
I saw him down; thrice up again, and fighting;
From helmet to the spur all blood he was.
EXETER. In which array (brave soldier) doth he lie,
Larding the plain: and by his bloody side
(Yoke-fellow to his honor-owing wounds)
The noble Earl of Suffolk also lies.
Suffolk first died: and York, all haggled o'er,

Comes to him, where in gore he lay insteep'd,
And takes him by the beard; kisses the gashes,
That bloodily did yawn upon his face;
And cries aloud—*Tarry, dear cousin Suffolk!*
My soul shall thine keep company to heaven:
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly a-breast;
As in this glorious and well-foughten field,
We kept together in our chivalry!
Upon these words I came, and cheer'd him up:
He smil'd me in the face, caught me by th' hand,
And, with a feeble gripe, says—*Dear my lord,*
Commend my service to my sovereign.
So did he turn, and over Suffolk's neck
He threw his wounded arm, and kiss'd his lips;
And so, espous'd to death, with blood he seal'd
A testament of noble-ending love."

But we must have done with splendid quotations. The behavior of the king, in the difficult and doubtful circumstances in which he is placed, is as patient and modest as it is spirited and lofty in his prosperous fortune. The character of the French nobles is also very admirably depicted; and the Dauphin's praise of his horse shows the vanity of that class of persons in a very striking point of view. Shakspeare always accompanies a foolish prince with a satirical courtier, as we see in this instance. The comic parts of HENRY V. are very inferior to those of *Henry IV.* Falstaff is dead, and without him, Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph, are satellites without a sun. Fluellen the Welshman is the most entertaining character in the piece. He is good-natured, brave, choleric, and pedantic. His parallel between Alexander and Harry of Monmouth, and his desire to have "some disputations" with Captain Macmorris on the discipline of the Roman wars, in the heat of the battle, are never to be forgotten. His treatment of Pistol is as good as Pistol's treatment of his French prisoner. There are two other remarkable prose passages in this play: the conversation of Henry in disguise with the three sentinels on the duties of a soldier, and his courtship of Katherine in broken French. We like them both exceedingly, though the first savors perhaps too much of the king, and the last too little of the lover

HENRY VI.

IN THREE PARTS.

During the time of the civil wars of York and Lancaster, England was a perfect bear-garden, and Shakspeare has given us a very lively picture of the scene. The three parts of Henry VI. convey a picture of very little else; and are inferior to the other historical plays. They have brilliant passages; but the general ground-work is comparatively poor and meagre, the style "flat and unraised." There are few lines like the following:

> "Glory is like a circle in the water;
> Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,
> Till by broad spreading it disperse to naught."

The first part relates to the wars in France after the death of Henry V., and the story of the Maid of Orleans. She is here almost as scurvily treated, as in Voltaire's *Pucelle*. Talbot is a very magnificent sketch: there is something as formidable in this portrait of him, as there would be in a monumental figure of him or in the sight of the armor which he wore. The scene in which he visits the Countess of Auvergne, who seeks to entrap him, is a very spirited one; and his description of his own treatment, while a prisoner to the French, not less remarkable.

> Salisbury. Yet tell'st thou not, how thou wert entertain'd.
> Talbot. With scoffs and scorns, and contumelious taunts,
> In open market-place produced they me,
> To be a public spectacle to all.

Here, said they, is the terror of the French,
The scarecrow that affrights our children so,
Then broke I from the officers that led me,
And with my nails digg'd stones out of the ground,
To hurl at the beholders of my shame.
My grisly countenance made others fly,
None durst come near for fear of sudden death.
In iron walls they deem'd me not secure:
So great a fear my name amongst them spread,
That they suppos'd I could rend bars of steel,
And spurn in pieces posts of adamant.
Wherefore a guard of chosen shot I had:
They walk'd about me every minute-while;
And if I did but stir out of my bed,
Ready they were to shoot me to the heart."

The second part relates chiefiy to the contests between the nobles during the minority of Henry, and the death of Gloucester, the good Duke Humphrey. The character of Cardinal Beaufort is the most prominent of the group: the account of his death is one of our author's master-pieces. So is the speech of Gloucester to the nobles on the loss of the provinces of France by the king's marriage with Margaret of Anjou. The pretensions and growing ambition of the Duke of York, the father of Richard III., are also very ably developed. Among the episodes, the tragi-comedy of Jack Cade, and the detection of the impostor Simcox, are truly edifying.

The third part describes Henry's loss of his crown: his death takes place in the last act, which is usually thrust into the common acting play of *Richard III.* The character of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard, is here very powerfully commenced, and his dangerous designs and long-aching ambition are fully described in his soliloquy in the third act, beginning, "Ay, Edward will use women honorably." Henry VI. is drawn as distinctly as his high-spirited Queen, and notwithstanding the very mean figure which Henry makes as a king, we still feel more respect for him than for his wife.

We have already observed that Shakspeare was scarcely more remarkable for the force and marked contrasts of his characters, than for the truth and subtlety with which he has distinguished those which approached the nearest to each other. For instance,

the soul of Othello is hardly more distinct from that of Iago than that of Desdemona is shown to be from Æmilia's; the ambition of Macbeth is as distinct from the ambition of Richard III. as it is from the meekness of Duncan; the real madness of Lear is as different from the feigned madness of Edgar* as from the babbling of the fool; the contrast between wit and folly in Falstaff and Shallow is not more characteristic though more obvious than the gradations of folly, loquacious or reserved, in Shallow and Silence; and again, the gallantry of Prince Henry is as little confounded with that of Hotspur as with the cowardice of Falstaff, or as the sensual and philosophic cowardice of the Knight is with the pitiful and cringing cowardice of Parolles. All these several personages were as different in Shakspeare as they would have been in themselves: his imagination borrowed from the life, and every circumstance, object, motive, passion, operated there as it would in reality, and produced a world of men and women as distinct, as true, and as various as those that exist in nature. The peculiar property of Shakspeare's imagination was his truth, accompanied with the unconsciousness of nature: indeed, imagination to be perfect must be unconscious, at least in production; for nature is so. We shall attempt one example more in the characters of Richard II. and Henry VI.

The characters and situations of both these persons were so nearly alike, that they would have been completely confounded by a common-place poet. Yet they are kept quite distinct in Shakspeare. Both were kings, and both unfortunate. Both lost their crowns owing to their mismanagement and imbecility; the one from a thoughtless, wilful abuse of power, the other from an indifference to it. The manner in which they bear their misfortunes corresponds exactly to the causes which led to them. The one is always lamenting the loss of his power, which he has not the spirit to regain; the other seems only to regret that he had ever been king, and is glad to be rid of the power, with the trouble: the effeminacy of the one is that of a voluptuary,

* There is another instance of the same distinction in Hamlet and Ophelia. Hamlet's pretended madness would make a very good real madness in any other author.

proud, revengeful, impatient of contradiction, and inconsolable in his misfortunes; the effeminacy of the other is that of an indolent, good-natured mind, naturally averse to the turmoils of ambition and the cares of greatness, and who wishes to pass his time in monkish indolence and contemplation. Richard bewails the loss of the kingly power only as it was the means of gratifying his pride and luxury; Henry regards it only as a means of doing right, and is less desirous of the advantages to be derived from possessing it than afraid of exercising it wrong. In knighting a young soldier, he gives him ghostly advice—

> "Edward Plantagenet, arise a knight,
> And learn this lesson, draw thy sword in right."

Richard II., in the first speeches of the play, betrays his real character. In the first alarm of his pride, on hearing of Bolingbroke's rebellion, before his presumption has met with any check, he exclaims—

> "Mock not my senseless conjuration, lords:
> This earth shall have a feeling, and these stones,
> Prove armed soldiers, ere her native king
> Shall faulter under proud rebellious arms.
> * * * * * *
> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm from an anointed king;
> The breath of worldly man cannot depose
> The Deputy elected by the Lord,
> For every man that Bolingbroke hath prest,
> To lift sharp steel against our golden crown,
> Heaven for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel; then if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall; for Heaven still guards the right."

Yet, notwithstanding this royal confession of faith, on the very first news of actual disaster, all his conceit of himself as the peculiar favorite of Providence vanishes into air.

> "But now the blood of twenty thousand men
> Did triumph in my face, and they are fled.
> All souls that will be safe fly from my side;
> For time hath set a blot upon my pride."

Immediately after, however, recollecting that "cheap defence" of the divinity of kings which is to be found in opinion, he is for arming his name against his enemies.

> "Awake, thou coward Majesty, thou sleep'st;
> Is not the King's name forty thousand names?
> Arm, arm, my name; a puny subject strikes
> At thy great glory!"

King Henry does not make any such vaporing resistance to the loss of his crown, but lets it slip from off his head as a weight which he is neither able nor willing to bear; stands quietly by to see the issue of the contest for his kingdom, as if it were a game at push-pin, and is pleased when the odds prove against him.

When Richard first hears of the death of his favorites, Bushy, Bagot, and the rest, he indignantly rejects all idea of any further efforts, and only indulges in the extravagant impatience of his grief and his despair, in that fine speech which has been so often quoted:—

> "AUMERLE. Where is the duke my father, with his power?
> K. RICHARD. No matter where: of comfort no man speak:
> Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs,
> Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
> Write sorrow in the bosom of the earth!
> Let's choose executors, and talk of wills:
> And yet not so—for what can we bequeath,
> Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
> Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke's,
> And nothing can we call our own but death,
> And that small model of the barren earth,
> Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
> For heaven's sake let us sit upon the ground,
> And tell sad stories of the death of kings.
> How some have been depos'd, some slain in war;
> Some haunted by the ghosts they dispossess'd;
> Some poison'd by their wives, some sleeping kill'd,
> All murdêr'd:—for within the hollow crown,
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
> Keeps death his court: and there the antic sits,
> Scoffing his state, and grinning at his pomp!

Allowing him a breath, a little scene
To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks
Infusing him with self and vain conceit—
As if this flesh, which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable: and humor'd thus,
Comes at the last, and, with a little pin,
Bores through his castle wall, and—farewell king!
Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence; throw away respect,
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live on bread like you, feel want, taste grief,
Need friends, like you;—subjected thus,
How can you say to me—I am a king?"

There is as little sincerity afterwards in his affected resignation to his fate, as there is fortitude in this exaggerated picture of his misfortunes before they have happened.

When Northumberland comes back with the message from Bolingbroke, he exclaims, anticipating the result,—

"What must the king do now? Must he submit?
The king shall do it: must he be depos'd?
The king shall be contented: must he lose
The name of king? O' God's name let it go.
I'll give my jewels for a set of beads;
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage;
My gay apparel for an alm's-man's gown;
My figur'd goblets for a dish of wood;
My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff;
My subjects for a pair of carved saints,
And my large kingdom for a little grave—
A little, little grave, an obscure grave."

How differently is all this expressed in King Henry's soliloquy during the battle with Edward's party:—

"This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light,
What time the shepherd blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day or night.
Here on this mole-hill will I sit me down;
To whom God will, there be the victory!
For Margaret my Queen and Clifford too

Have chid me from the battle, swearing both
They prosper best of all when I am thence.
Would I were dead, if God's good will were so,
For what is in this world but grief and wo?
O God! methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
How many make the hour full complete,
How many hours bring about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours must I tend my flock,
So many hours must I take my rest,
So many hours must I contemplate,
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young,
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean,
So many months ere I shall shear the fleece:
So many minutes, hours, weeks, months, and years
Past over, to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah! what a life were this! how sweet, how lovely!
Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?
O yes it doth, a thousand-fold it doth,
And to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
Is far beyond a prince's delicates,
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couched in a curious bed,
Where care, mistrust, and treasons wait on him."

This is a true and beautiful description of a naturally quiet and contented disposition, and not, like the former, the splenetic effusion of disappointed ambition.

In the last scene of Richard II. his despair lends him courage: he beats the keeper, slays two of his assassins, and dies with im-

precations in his mouth against Sir Pierce Exton, who "had staggered his royal person." Henry, when he is seized by the deer-stealers, only reads them a moral lecture on the duty of allegiance and the sanctity of an oath; and when stabbed by Gloucester in the Tower, reproaches him with his crimes, but pardons him his own death.

RICHARD III.

RICHARD III. may be considered as properly a stage-play: it belongs to the theatre, rather than to the closet. We shall therefore criticise it chiefly with a reference to the manner in which we have seen it performed. It is the character in which Garrick came out: it was the second character in which Mr. Kean appeared, and in which he acquired his fame. Shakspeare we have always with us: actors we have only for a few seasons; and therefore some account of them may be acceptable, if not to our contemporaries, to those who come after us, if "that rich and idle personage, Posterity," should deign to look into our writings.

It is possible to form a higher conception of the character of Richard than that given by Mr. Kean (not from seeing any other actor, but from reading Shakspeare); but we cannot imagine any character represented with greater distinctness and precision, more perfectly *articulated* in every part. Perhaps indeed there is too much of what is technically called execution. When we first saw this celebrated actor in the part, we thought he sometimes failed from an exuberance of manner, and dissipated the impression of the character by the variety of his resources. To be perfect his delineation of it should have a little more solidity, depth, sustained and impassioned feeling, with somewhat less brilliancy, with fewer glancing lights, pointed transitions, and pantomimic evolutions.

The Richard of Shakspeare is towering and lofty; equally impetuous and commanding; haughty, violent, and subtle; bold and treacherous; confident in his strength as well as in his cunning; raised high by his birth, and higher by his genius and his crimes; a royal usurper, a princely hypocrite, a tyrant and a murderer of the house of Plantagenet.

> "But I was born so high:
> Our aery buildeth in the cedar's top,
> And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun."

The idea conveyed in these lines (which are indeed omitted in the miserable medley acted for RICHARD III.) is never lost sight of by Shakspeare, and should not be out of the actor's mind for a moment. The restless and sanguinary Richard is not a man striving to be great, but to be greater than he is; conscious of his strength of will, his power of intellect, his daring courage, his elevated station; and making use of these advantages as giving him both the means and the pretext to commit unheard-of crimes, and to shield himself from remorse and infamy.

If Mr. Kean does not entirely succeed in concentrating all the lines of the character, as drawn by Shakspeare, he gives an animation, vigor, and relief to the part which we have never seen surpassed. He is more refined than Cooke; more bold, varied, and original than Kemble in the same character. In some parts he is deficient in dignity, and, particularly in the scenes of state business, he has by no means an air of artificial authority. There is at times a sort of tip-toe elevation, an enthusiastic rapture in his expectations of attaining the crown, and at others a gloating expression of sullen delight, as if he already clenched the bauble, and held it in his grasp. This was the precise expression which Mr. Kean gave with so much effect to the part where he says, that he already feels "The golden rigol bind his brows." In one who *dares* so much, there is indeed little to blame. The courtship scene with Lady Anne is an admirable exhibition of smooth and smiling villainy. The progress of wily adulation, of encroaching humility, is finely marked by his action, voice and eye. He seems, like the first Tempter, to approach his prey, secure of the event, and as if success had smoothed his way before him. Mr. Cooke's manner of representing this scene was more vehement, hurried, and full of anxious uncertainty. This, though more natural in general, was less in character in this particular instance. Richard should woo not as a lover but as an actor—to show his mental superiority, and power of making others the playthings of his will. Mr.

Kean's attitude in leaning against the side of the stage before he comes forward to address Lady Anne, is one of the most graceful and striking ever witnessed on the stage. It would have done for Titian to paint. The frequent and rapid transition of his voice from the expression of the fiercest passion to the most familiar tones of conversation was that which gave a peculiar grace of novelty to his acting on his first appearance. This has been since imitated and caricatured by others, and he himself uses the artifice more sparingly than he did. His bye-play is excellent. His manner of bidding his friends "Good night," after pausing with the point of his sword, drawn slowly backward and forward on the ground, as if considering the plan of the battle next day, is a particularly happy and natural thought. He gives to the two last acts of the play the greatest animation and effect. He fills every part of the stage; and makes up for the deficiency of his person by what has been sometimes objected to as an excess of action. The concluding scene, in which he is killed by Richmond, is the most brilliant of the whole. He fights at last like one drunk with wounds; and the attitude in which he stands with his hands stretched out, after his sword is wrested from him, has a preternatural and terrific grandeur, as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had withering power to kill.—Mr. Kean has since in a great measure effaced the impression of his Richard III. by the superior efforts of his genius in Othello (his master-piece), in the murder-scene in Macbeth, in Richard II., in Sir Giles Overreach, and lastly in Oroonoko; but we still like to look back to his first performance of this part, both because it first assured his admirers of his future success, and because we bore our feeble but, at that time, not useless testimony to the merits of this very original actor, on which the town was considerably divided for no other reason than because they *were* original.

The manner in which Shakspeare's plays have been generally altered or rather mangled by modern mechanists, is a disgrace to the English stage. The patch-work RICHARD III. which is acted under the sanction of his name, and which was manufactured by Cibber, is a striking example of this remark.

The play itself is undoubtedly a very powerful effusion of

Shakspeare's genius. The ground-work of the character of Richard, that mixture of intellectual vigor with moral depravity in which Shakspeare delighted to show his strength, gave full scope as well as temptation to the exercise of his imagination. The character of his hero is almost everywhere predominant, and marks its lurid track throughout. The original play is however too long for representation, and there are some few scenes which might be better spared than preserved, and by omitting which it would remain a complete whole. The only rule, indeed, for altering Shakspeare is to retrench certain passages which may be considered either as superfluous or obsolete, but not to add or transpose anything. The arrangement and development of the story, and the mutual contrast and combination of the *dramatis personæ*, are in general as finely managed as the development of the characters or the expression of the passions.

This rule has not been adhered to in the present instance. Some of the most important and striking passages in the principal character have been omitted, to make room for idle and misplaced extracts from other plays; the only intention of which seems to have been to make the character of Richard as odious and disgusting as possible. It is apparently for no other purpose than to make Gloucester stab King Henry on the stage, that the fine abrupt introduction of the character in the opening of the play is lost in the tedious whining morality of the uxorious king (taken from another play); we say *tedious*, because it interrupts the business of the scene, and loses its beauty and effect by having no intelligible connection with the previous character of the mild, well-meaning monarch. The passages which the unfortunate Henry has to recite are beautiful and pathetic in themselves, but they have nothing to do with the world that Richard has to "bustle in." In the same spirit of vulgar caricature is the scene between Richard and Lady Anne (when his wife) interpolated without any authority, merely to gratify this favorite propensity to disgust and loathing. With the same perverse consistency, Richard, after his last fatal struggle, is raised up by some Galvanic process, to utter the imprecation, without any motive but pure malignity, which Shakspeare has so properly put into the mouth of Northumberland on hearing of Percy's

death. To make room for these worse than needless additions, many of the most striking passages in the real play have been omitted by the foppery and ignorance of the prompt-book critics. We do not mean to insist merely on passages which are fine as poetry and to the reader, such as Clarence's dream, &c., but on those which are important to the understanding of the character, and peculiarly adapted for stage effect. We will give the following as instances among several others. The first is the scene where Richard enters abruptly to the queen and her friends to defend himself:—

> "GLOUCESTER. They do me wrong, and I will not endure it.
> Who are they that complain unto the king,
> That I forsooth am stern, and love them not?
> By holy Paul, they love his grace but lightly,
> That fill his ears with such dissensious rumors:
> Because I cannot flatter and look fair,
> Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,
> Duck with French nods, and apish courtesy,
> I must be held a rancorous enemy.
> Cannot a plain man live, and think no harm,
> But thus his simple truth must be abus'd
> With silken, sly, insinuating Jacks?
> GRAY. To whom in all this presence speaks your grace?
> GLOUCESTER. To thee, that hast nor honesty nor grace?
> When have I injur'd thee, when done thee wrong?
> Or thee? or thee? or any of your faction?
> A plague upon you all!"

Nothing can be more characteristic than the turbulent pretensions to meekness and simplicity in this address. Again, the versatility and adroitness of Richard is admirably described in the following ironical conversation with Brakenbury:—

> "BRAKENBURY. I beseech your graces both to pardon me.
> His Majesty hath straitly given in charge,
> That no man shall have private conference,
> Of what degree soever, with your brother.
> GLOUCESTER. E'en so, and please your worship, Brakenbury,
> You may partake of anything we say:
> We speak no treason, man—we say the king
> Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
> Well strook in years, fair, and not jealous.
> We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,

A cherry lip, a passing pleasing tongue;
That the queen's kindred are made gentlefolks,
How say you, sir? Can you deny all this?
BRAKENBURY. With this, my lord, myself have naught to do.
GLOUCESTER What, fellow, naught to do with mistress Shore?
I tell you, sir, he that doth naught with her,
Excepting one, were best to do it secretly alone.
BRAKENBURY. What one, my lord?
GLOUCESTER. Her husband, knave—would'st thou betray me?"

The feigned reconciliation of Gloucester with the queen's kinsmen is also a master-piece. One of the finest strokes in the play, and which serves to show as much as anything the deep, plausible manners of Richard, is the unsuspecting security of Hastings, at the very time when the former is plotting his death, and when that very appearance of cordiality and good humor on which Hastings builds his confidence arises from Richard's consciousness of having betrayed him to his ruin. This, with the whole character of Hastings, is omitted.

Perhaps the two most beautiful passages in the original play are the farewell apostrophe of the queen to the Tower, where her children are shut up from her, and Tyrrel's description of their death. We will finish our quotations with them.

"QUEEN. Stay, yet look back with me unto the Tower,
Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes,
Whom envy hath immured within your walls;
Rough cradle for such little pretty ones,
Rude, rugged nurse, old sullen play-fellow,
For tender princes!"

The other passage is the account of their death by Tyrrel:—

"Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
To do this piece of ruthless butchery,
Albeit they were flesh'd villains, bloody dogs,
Wept like to children in their death's sad story:
O thus! quoth Dighton, lay the gentle babes;
Thus, thus, quoth Forrest, girdling one another
Within their innocent alabaster arms;
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
And in that summer beauty kissed each other
A book of prayers on their pillow lay,

Which once, quoth Forrest, almost changed my mind,
But oh the devil!—there the villain stopped;
When Dighton thus told on—we smothered
The most replenished sweet work of nature,
That from the prime creation e'er she framed."

These are some of those wonderful bursts of feeling, done to the life, to the very height of fancy and nature, which our Shakspeare alone could give. We do not insist on the repetition of these last passages as proper for the stage: we should indeed be loth to trust them in the mouth of almost any actor: but we should wish them to be retained in preference at least to the fantoccini exhibition of the young princes, Edward and York, bandying childish wit with their uncle.

The introduction of the ghosts through the trap-doors of the stage should be altogether omitted. The speeches which they address to Richard might be delivered just as well from behind the scenes. These sort of exhibitions might have been very proper for a superstitious age, but in an age not superstitious they excite ridicule instead of terror.

HENRY VIII.

This play contains little action or violence of passion, yet it has considerable interest of a more mild and thoughtful cast, and some of the most striking passages in the author's works. The character of Queen Katherine is the most perfect delineation of matronly dignity, sweetness, and resignation, that can be conceived. Her appeals to the protection of the king, her remonstrances to the cardinals, her conversations with her women, show a noble and generous spirit accompanied with the utmost gentleness of nature. What can be more affecting than her answer to Campeius and Wolsey, who come to visit her as pretended friends?

> ——— "Nay, forsooth, my friends,
> They that my trust must grow to, live not here;
> They are, as all my comforts are, far hence,
> In my own country, lords."

Dr. Johnson observes of this play, that "the meek sorrows and virtuous distresses of Katherine have furnished some scenes, which may be justly numbered among the greatest efforts of tragedy. But the genius of Shakspeare comes in and goes out with Katherine. Every other part may be easily conceived and easily written." This is easily said; but with all due deference to so great a reputed authority as that of Johnson, it is not true. For instance, the scene of Buckingham led to execution is one of the most affecting and natural in Shakspeare, and one to which there is hardly an approach in any other author. Again, the character of Wolsey, the description of his pride and of his fall, are inimitable, and have, besides their gorgeousness of

effect, a pathos, which only the genius of Shakspeare could lend to the distresses of a proud, bad man, like Wolsey. There is a sort of child-like simplicity in the very helplessness of his situation, arising from the recollection of his past overbearing ambition. After the cutting sarcasms of his enemies, on his disgrace, against which he bears up with a spirit conscious of his own superiority, he breaks out into that fine apostrophe—

> "Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness!
> This is the state of man; to-day he puts forth
> The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
> And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
> The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
> And—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
> His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,
> And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> These many summers in a sea of glory;
> But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
> At length broke under me; and now has left me,
> Weary and old with service, to the mercy
> Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
> Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye!
> I feel my heart now open'd: O how wretched
> Is that poor man, that hangs on princes' favors!
> There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
> That sweet aspect of princes, and our ruin,
> More pangs and fears than war and women have;
> And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
> Never to hope again!"

There is in this passage, as well as in the well-known dialogue with Cromwell which follows, something which stretches beyond common-place; nor is the account which Griffiths gives of Wolsey's death less Shakspearian; and the candor with which Queen Katherine listens to the praise of "him whom of all men while living she hated most" adds the last graceful finishing to her character.

Among other images of great individual beauty might be mentioned the description of the effect of Ann Boleyn's presenting herself to the crowd at her coronation.

———"While her grace sat down
To rest awhile, some half an hour or so,
In a rich chair of state, opposing freely
The beauty of her person to the people.
Believe me, sir, she is the goodliest woman
That ever lay by man. Which when the people
Had the full view of, *such a noise arose*
As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest,
As loud and to as many tunes."

The character of Henry VIII. is drawn with great truth and spirit. It is like a very disagreeable portrait, sketched by the hand of a master. His gross appearance, his blustering demeanor, his vulgarity, his arrogance, his sensuality, his cruelty, his hypocrisy, his want of common decency and common humanity, are marked in strong lines. His traditional peculiarities of expression complete the reality of the picture. The authoritative expletive, "Ha!" with which he intimates his indignation or surprise, has an effect like the first startling sound that breaks from a thunder-cloud. He is of all the monarchs in our history the most disgusting: for he unites in himself all the vices of barbarism and refinement, without their virtues. Other kings before him (such as Richard III.) were tyrants and murderers out of ambition or necessity: they gained or established unjust power by violent means: they destroyed their enemies, or those who barred their access to the throne or made its tenure insecure. But Henry VIII.'s power is most fatal to those whom he loves: he is cruel and remorseless to pamper his luxurious appetites; bloody and voluptuous; an amorous murderer; an uxorious debauchee. His hardened insensibility to the feelings of others is strengthened by the most profligate self-indulgence. The religious hypocrisy, under which he masks his cruelty and his lust, is admirably displayed in the speech in which he describes the first misgivings of his conscience and its increasing throes and terrors, which have induced him to divorce his queen. The only thing in his favor in this play is his treatment of Cranmer: there is also another circumstance in his favor, which is his patronage of Hans Holbein.—It has been said of Shakspeare—"No maid could live

near such a man." It might with as good reason be said—"No king could live near such a man." His eye would have penetrated through the pomp of circumstances and veil of opinion. As it is, he has represented such a person to the life—his plays are in this respect the glass of history—he has done them the same justice as if he had been a privy councillor all his life, and in each successive reign. Kings ought never to be seen upon the stage. In the abstract, they are very disagreeable characters: it is only while living that they are "the best of kings." It is their power, their splendor, it is the apprehension of the personal consequences of their favor or their hatred, that dazzles the imagination and suspends the judgment of their favorites or their vassals; but death cancels the bond of allegiance and of interest; and seen *as they were*, their power and their pretensions look monstrous and ridiculous. The charge brought against modern philosophy as inimical to loyalty is unjust, because it might as well be brought against other things. No reader of history can be a lover of kings. We have often wondered that Henry VIII., as he is drawn by Shakspeare, and as we have seen him represented in all the bloated deformity of mind and person, is not hooted from the English stage.

KING JOHN.

KING JOHN is the last of the historical plays we shall have to speak of; and we are not sorry that it is. If we are to indulge our imaginations, we had rather do it upon an imaginary theme; if we are to find subjects for the exercise of our pity and terror, we prefer seeking them in fictitious danger and fictitious distress. It gives a *soreness* to our feelings of indignation or sympathy, when we know that in tracing the progress of sufferings and crimes, we are treading upon real ground, and recollect that the poet's "dream" *denoted a foregone conclusion*—irrevocable ills, not conjured up by the fancy, but placed beyond the reach of poetical justice. That the treachery of King John, the death of Arthur, the grief of Constance, had a real truth in history, sharpens the sense of pain, while it hangs a leaden weight on the heart and the imagination. Something whispers us that we have no right to make a mock of calamities like these, or to turn the truth of things into the puppet and plaything of our fancies. "To consider thus" may be "to consider too curiously;" but still we think that the actual truth of the particular events, in proportion as we are conscious of it, is a drawback on the pleasure as well as the dignity of tragedy.

KING JOHN has all the beauties of language and all the richness of the imagination to relieve the painfulness of the subject. The character of King John himself is kept pretty much in the back ground; it is only marked in by comparatively slight indications. The crimes he is tempted to commit are such as are thrust upon him rather by circumstances and opportunity than of his own seeking: he is here represented as more cowardly than cruel, and as more contemptible than odious. The play embraces only a part of his history. There are, however, a few

characters on the stage that excite more disgust and loathing. He has no intellectual grandeur or strength of character to shield him from the indignation which his immediate conduct provokes: he stands naked and defenceless, in that respect, to the worst we can think of him: and besides, we are impelled to put the very worst construction on his meanness and cruelty by the tender picture of the beauty and helplessness of the object of it, as well as by the frantic and heart-rending pleadings of maternal despair. We do not forgive him the death of Arthur because he had too late revoked his doom and tried to prevent it, and perhaps because he has himself repented of his black design, our *moral sense* gains courage to hate him the more for it. We take him at his word, and think his purposes must be odious indeed, when he himself shrinks back from them. The scene in which King John suggests to Hubert the design of murdering his nephew, is a master-piece of dramatic skill, but it is still inferior, very inferior to the scene between Hubert and Arthur, when the latter learns the orders to put out his eyes. If anything ever was penned, heart-piercing, mixing the extremes of terror and pity, of that which shocks and that which soothes the mind, it is this scene.

Arthur's death afterwards, when he throws himself from his prison walls, excites the utmost pity for his innocence and friendless situation, and well justifies the exaggerated denunciations of Falconbridge to Hubert, whom he suspects wrongfully of the deed.

> "There is not yet so ugly a fiend of hell
> As thou shalt be, if thou did'st kill this child.
> --If thou did'st but consent
> To this most cruel act, do but despair:
> And if thou want'st a cord, the smallest thread
> That ever spider twisted from her womb
> Will strangle thee: a rush will be a beam
> To hang thee on: or would'st thou drown thyself,
> Put but a little water in a spoon,
> And it shall be as all the ocean,
> Enough to stifle such a villain up."

The excess of maternal tenderness, rendered desperate by the

fickleness of friends and the injustice of fortune, and made stronger in will, in proportion to the want of all other power, was never more finely expressed than in Constance. The dignity of her answer to King Philip, when she refuses to accompany his messenger, "To me and to the state of my great grief, let kings assemble," her indignant reproach to Austria for deserting her cause, her invocation to death, "that love of misery," however fine and spirited, all yield to the beauty of the passage, where, her passion subsiding into tenderness, she addresses the Cardinal in these words:—

> "O father Cardinal, I have heard you say
> That we shall see and know our friends in heav'n;
> If that be, I shall see my boy again,
> For since the birth of Cain, the first male child;
> To him that did but yesterday suspire,
> There was not such a gracious creature born.
> But now will canker-sorrow eat my bud,
> And chase the native beauty from his cheek,
> And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
> As dim and meagre as an ague's fit,
> And so he'll die; and rising so again,
> When I shall meet him in the court of heav'n
> I shall not know him; therefore never, never
> Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.
>
> K. Philip. You are as fond of grief as of your child.
>
> Constance. Grief fills the room up of my absent child:
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
> Remembers me of all his gracious parts;
> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
> Then have I reason to be fond of grief."

The contrast between the mild resignation of Queen Katherine to her own wrongs, and the wild, uncontrollable affliction of Constance for the wrongs which she sustains as a mother, is no less naturally conceived than it is ably sustained throughout these two wonderful characters.

The accompaniment of the comic character of the Bastard was well chosen to relieve the poignant agony of suffering, and the cold, cowardly policy of behavior in the principal characters of this play. Its spirit, invention, volubility of tongue, and for-

wardness in action, are unbounded. *Aliquando sufflaminandus erat*, says Ben Jonson of Shakspeare. But we should be sorry if Ben Jonson had been his licenser. We prefer the heedless magnanimity of his wit infinitely to all Jonson's laborious caution. The character of the Bastard's comic humor is the same in essence as that of other comic characters in Shakspeare; they always run on with good things, and are never exhausted; they are always daring and successful. They have words at will and a flow of wit, like a flow of animal spirits. The difference between Falconbridge and the others is that he is a soldier, and brings his wit to bear upon action, is courageous with his sword as well as tongue, and stimulates his gallantry by his jokes, his enemies feeling the sharpness of his blows and the sting of his sarcasms at the same time. Among his happiest sallies are his descanting on the composition of his own person, his invective against "commodity, tickling commodity," and his expression of contempt for the Archduke of Austria, who had killed his father, which begins in jest but ends in serious earnest. His conduct at the siege of Angiers shows that his resources were not confined to verbal retorts. The same exposure of the policy of courts and camps, of kings, nobles, priests, and cardinals, takes place here as in the other plays we have gone through, and we shall not go into a disgusting repetition.

This, like the other plays taken from English history, is written in a remarkably smooth and flowing style, very different from some of the tragedies—*Macbeth*, for instance. The passages consist of a series of single lines, not running into one another. This peculiarity in the versification, which is most common in the three parts of *Henry VI.*, has been assigned as a reason why those plays were not written by Shakspeare. But the same structure of verse occurs in his other undoubted plays, as in *Richard II.* and in *King John*. The following are instances:—

> "That daughter there of Spain, the lady Blanch,
> Is near to England; look upon the years
> Of Lewis the dauphin, and that lovely maid.
> If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,
> Where should he find it fairer than in Blanch?
> If zealous love should go in search of virtue,
> Where should he find it purer than in Blanch?

If love ambitious sought a match of birth,
Whose veins bound richer blood than lady Blanch?
Such as she is, in beauty, virtue, birth,
Is the young dauphin every way complete:
If not complete of, say he is not she;
And she wants nothing, to name want,
If want it be not, that she is not he.
He is the half part of a blessed man,
Left to be finished by such as she;
And she a fair divided excellence,
Whose fulness of perfection lies in him.
O, two such silver currents, when they join,
Do glorify the banks that bound them in:
And two such shores to two such streams made one,
Two such controlling bounds, shall you be kings,
To these two princes, if you marry them."

Another instance, which is certainly very happy as an example of the simple enumeration of a number of particulars, is Salisbury's remonstrance against the second crowning of the king.

"Therefore to be possessed with double pomp,
To guard a title that was rich before;
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, to add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper light
To seek the beauteous eye of heav'n to garnish
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess."

TWELFTH NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL.

This is justly considered as one of the most delightful of Shakspeare's comedies. It is full of sweetness and pleasantry. It is perhaps too good-natured for comedy. It has little satire, and no spleen. It aims at the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. It makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not despise them, and still less bear any ill-will towards them. Shakspeare's comic genius resembles the bee rather in its power of extracting sweets from weeds or poisons, than in leaving a sting behind it. He gives the most amusing exaggeration of the prevailing foibles of his characters, but in a way that they themselves, instead of being offended at, would almost join in to humor; he rather contrives opportunities for them to show themselves off in the happiest lights, than renders them contemptible in the perverse construction of the wit or malice of others. There is a certain stage of society in which people become conscious of their peculiarities and absurdities, affect to disguise what they are, and set up pretensions to what they are not. This gives rise to a corresponding style of comedy, the object of which is to detect the disguises of self-love, and to make reprisals on these preposterous assumptions of vanity, by marking the contrast between the real and the affected character as severely as possible, and denying to those, who would impose on us for what they are not, even the merit which they have. This is the comedy of artificial life, of wit and satire, such as we see it in Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, &c. To this succeeds a state of society from which the same sort of affectation and pretence are banished by a greater knowledge of the world or by their successful exposure on the stage; and which by neutralising the materials

of comic character, both natural and artificial, leaves no comedy at all—but *the sentimental*. Such is our modern comedy. There is a period in the progress of manners anterior to both these, in which the foibles and follies of individuals are of nature's planting, not the growth of art or study; in which they are therefore unconscious of them themselves, or care not who knows them, if they can but have their whim out; and in which, as there is no attempt at imposition, the spectators rather receive pleasure from humoring the inclinations of the persons they laugh at, than wish to give them pain by exposing their absurdity. This may be called the comedy of nature, and it is the comedy which we generally find in Shakspeare. Whether the analysis here given be just or not, the spirit of his comedies is evidently quite distinct from that of the authors above mentioned, as it is in its essence the same with that of Cervantes, and also very frequently of Molière, though he was more systematic in his extravagance than Shakspeare. Shakspeare's comedy is of a pastoral and poetical cast. Folly is indigenous to the soil, and shoots out with native, happy, unchecked luxuriance. Absurdity has every encouragement afforded it; and nonsense has room to flourish in. Nothing is stunted by the churlish, icy hand of indifference or severity. The poet runs riot in a conceit, and idolizes a quibble. His whole object is to turn the meanest or rudest objects to a pleasurable account. The relish which he has of a pun, or of the quaint humor of a low character, does not interfere with the delight with which he describes a beautiful image, or the most refined love. The clown's forced jests do not spoil the sweetness of the character of Viola; the same house is big enough to hold Malvolio, the Countess, Maria, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. For instance, nothing can fall much lower than this last character in intellect or morals: yet how are his weaknesses nursed and dandled by Sir Toby into something "high fantastical," when on Sir Andrew's commendation of himself for dancing and fencing, Sir Toby answers—"Wherefore are these things hid? Wherefore have these gifts a curtain before them? Are they like to take dust like mistress Moll's picture? Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard, and come home in a coranto? My very walk should be a jig!

What dost thou mean? Is this a world to hide virtues in? I did think by the excellent constitution of thy leg, it was framed under the star of a galliard!" How Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and the Clown afterwards *chirp over their cups*, how they "rouse the night-owl in a catch, able to draw three souls out of one weaver?" What can be better than Sir Toby's unanswerable answer to Malvolio, "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"—In a word, the best turn is given to everything, instead of the worst. There is a constant infusion of the romantic and enthusiastic, in proportion as the characters are natural and sincere; whereas, in the more artificial style of comedy, everything gives way to ridicule and indifference, there being nothing left but affectation on one side, and incredulity on the other. Much as we like Shakspeare's comedies, we cannot agree with Dr. Johnson that they are better than his tragedies; nor do we like them half so well If his inclination to comedy sometimes led him to trifle with the seriousness of tragedy, the poetical and impassioned passages are the best parts of his comedies. The great and secret charm of TWELFTH NIGHT is the character of Viola. Much as we think of catches and cakes and ale, there is something that we like better. We have a friendship for Sir Toby; we patronise Sir Andrew; we have an understanding with the Clown, a sneaking kindness for Maria and her rogueries; we feel a regard for Malvolio, and sympathize with his gravity, his smiles, his cross garters, his yellow stockings, and imprisonment in the stocks. But there is something that excites in us a stronger feeling than all this—it is Viola's confession of her love.

"DUKE. What's her history?
VIOLA. *A blank, my lord, she never told her love*
She let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,
Feed on her damask cheek; she pin'd in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. *Was not this love indeed?*
We men may say more, swear more, but indeed,
Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love.
DUKE. But died thy sister of her love, my boy?

VIOLA. I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too;—and yet I know not."—

Shakspeare alone could describe the effect of his own poetry.

"Oh, it came o'er the ear like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor."

What we so much admire here is not the image of Patience on a monument, which has been generally quoted, but the lines before and after it. "They give a very echo to the seat where love is throned." How long ago it is since we first learnt to repeat them; and still, still they vibrate on the heart, like the sounds which the passing wind draws from the trembling strings of a harp left on some desert shore! There are other passages of not less impassioned sweetness. Such is Olivia's address to Sebastian, whom she supposes to have already deceived her in a promise of marriage.

"Blame not this haste of mine: if you mean well,
Now go with me and with this holy man
Into the chantry by: there before him,
And underneath that consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith,
That my most jealous and too doubtful soul
May live at peace."

We have already said something of Shakspeare's songs. One of the most beautiful of them occurs in this play, with a preface of his own to it.

"DUKE. O fellow, come; the song we had last night.
Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain:
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
Do use to chaunt it: it is silly sooth,
And dallies with the innocence of love,
Like the old age.

SONG.

Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cyprus let me be laid;

Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it;
My part of death no one so true
Did share it.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strewn;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown:
A thousand thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O! where
Sad true love never find my grave,
To weep there."

Who after this will say that Shakspeare's genius was only fitted for comedy? Yet after reading other parts of this play, and particularly the garden-scene where Malvolio picks up the letter, if we were to say that his genius for comedy was less than his genius for tragedy, it would perhaps only prove that our own taste in such matters is more saturnine than mercurial.

"*Enter* MARIA.

SIR TOBY. Here comes the little villain:—How now, my nettle of India?

MARIA. Get ye all three into the box-tree: Malvolio's coming down this walk: he has been yonder i' the sun, practising behavior to his own shadow this half hour: observe him, for the love of mockery; for I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him. Close, in the name of jesting! Lie thou there; for here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling.

[*They hide themselves.* MARIA *throws down a letter, and Exit.*]

Enter MALVOLIO.

MALVOLIO Tis but fortune; all is fortune. Maria once told me she did affect me; and I have heard herself come thus near, that, should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than any one else that follows her. What should I think on 't?

SIR TOBY. Here's an over-weening rogue!

FABIAN. O, peace! Contemplation makes a rare turkeycock of him: how he jets under his advanced plumes!

SIR ANDREW. 'Slight, I could so beat the rogue:—

SIR TOBY. Peace, I say.

MALVOLIO To be Count Malvolio;—

SIR TOBY. Ah, rogue!

SIR ANDREW. Pistol him, pistol him.

SIR TOBY. Peace, peace!

MALVOLIO. There is example for 't; the lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe.

SIR ANDREW. Fie on him, Jezebel!

FABIAN. O, peace! now he's deeply in; look, how imagination blows him.

MALVOLIO. Having been three months married to her, sitting in my chair of state,—

SIR TOBY. O for a stone-bow, to hit him in the eye!

MALVOLIO. Calling my officers about me, in my branch'd velvet gown; having come from a day-bed, where I have left Olivia sleeping.

SIR TOBY. Fire and brimstone!

FABIAN. O peace, peace!

MALVOLIO. And then to have the humor of state: and after a demure travel of regard,——telling them, I know my place, as I would they should do theirs,—to ask for my kinsman Toby.——

SIR TOBY. Bolts and shackles!

FABIAN. O, peace, peace, peace! now, now.

MALVOLIO. Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for him I frown the while; and, perchance, wind up my watch, or play with some rich jewel. Toby approaches; curtsies there to me:

SIR TOBY. Shall this fellow live?

FABIAN. Though our silence be drawn from us with cares, yet peace.

MALVOLIO. I extend my hand to him thus, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control:

SIR TOBY. And does not Toby take you a blow of the lips then?

MALVOLIO. Saying—Cousin Toby, my fortunes having cast me on your niece, give me this prerogative of speech;—

SIR TOBY. What, what?

MALVOLIO. You must amend your drunkenness.

FABIAN. Nay, patience, or we break the sinews of our plot.

MALVOLIO. Besides, you waste the treasure of your time with a foolish knight—

SIR ANDREW. That's me, I warrant you.

MALVOLIO. One Sir Andrew——

SIR ANDREW. I knew, 'twas I; for many do call me fool.

MALVOLIO. What employment have we here?

[*Taking up the letter.*"

The letter and his comments on it are equally good. If poor Malvolio's treatment afterwards is a little hard, poetical justice

is done in the uneasiness which Olivia suffers on account of her mistaken attachment to Cesario, as her insensibility to the violence of the Duke's passion is atoned for by the discovery of Viola's concealed love of him.

THE

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

This is little more than the first outlines of a comedy loosely sketched in. It is the story of a novel dramatised with very little labor or pretension; yet there are passages of high poetical spirit, and of inimitable quaintness of humor, which are undoubtedly Shakspeare's, and there is throughout the conduct of the fable, a careless grace and felicity which marks it for his. One of the editors (we believe Mr. Pope) remarks in a marginal note to the Two Gentlemen of Verona—"It is observable (I know not for what cause) that the style of this comedy is less figurative, and more natural and unaffected than the greater part of this author's, though supposed to be one of the first he wrote." Yet so little does the editor appear to have made up his mind upon this subject, that we find the following note to the very next (the second) scene. "This whole scene, like many others in these plays (some of which I believe were written by Shakspeare, and others interpolated by the players) is composed of the lowest and most trifling conceits, to be accounted for only by the gross taste of the age he lived in: *Populo ut placerent.* I wish I had authority to leave them out, but I have done all I could, set a mark of reprobation upon them, throughout this edition." It is strange that our fastidious critic should fall so soon from praising to reprobating. The style of the familiar parts of this comedy is indeed made up of conceits—low they may be for what we know, but then they are not poor, but rich ones. The scene of Launce with his dog (not that in the second, but that in the fourth act) is a perfect treat in the way of

farcical drollery and invention; nor do we think Speed's manner of proving his master to be in love deficient in wit or sense, though the style may be criticised as not simple enough for the modern taste.

"VALENTINE. Why, how know you that I am in love?

SPEED. Marry, by these special marks: first, you have learned, like Sir Protheus, to wreathe your arms like a malcontent, to relish a love-song like a robin-red-breast, to walk alone like one that had the pestilence, to sigh like a school-boy that had lost his A B C, to weep like a young wench that had lost her grandam, to fast like one that takes diet, to watch like one that fears robbing, to speak puling like a beggar at Hallowmas You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock; when you walked, to walk like one of the lions; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner; when you looked sadly, it was for want of money; and now you are metamorphosed with a mistress that when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master."

The tender scenes in this play, though not so highly wrought as in some others, have often much sweetness of sentiment and expression. There is something pretty and playful in the conversation of Julia with her maid, when she shows such a disposition to coquetry about receiving the letter from Protheus; and her behavior afterwards and her disappointment, when she finds him faithless to his vows, remind us at a distance of Imogen's tender constancy. Her answer to Lucetta, who advises her against following her lover in disguise, is a beautiful piece of poetry.

"LUCETTA. I do not seek to quench your love's hot fire,
But qualify the fire's extremest rage,
Lest it should burn above the bounds of reason.
JULIA. The more thou damm'st it up, the more it burns;
The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with th' enamell'd stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage.
And so by many winding nooks he strays,
With willing sport, to the wild ocean.
Then let me go, and hinder not my course;
I'll be as patient as a gentle stream,

And make a pastime of each weary step,
Till the last step have brought me to my love;
And there I'll rest, as after much turmoil,
A blessed soul doth in Elysium."

If Shakspeare indeed had written only this and other passages in the Two Gentlemen of Verona, he would *almost* have deserved Milton's praise of him—

And sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
Warbles his native wood-notes wild.

But as it is, he deserves rather more praise than this.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

This is a play that in spite of the change of manners and of prejudices still holds undisputed possession of the stage. Shakspeare's malignant has outlived Mr. Cumberland's benevolent Jew. In proportion as Shylock has ceased to be a popular bugbear, "baited with the rabble's curse," he becomes a half-favorite with the philosophical part of the audience, who are disposed to think that Jewish revenge is at least as good as Christian injuries. Shylock is *a good hater;* "a man no less sinned against than sinning." If he carries his revenge too far, yet he has strong grounds for "the lodged hate he bears Anthonio," which he explains with equal force of eloquence and reason. He seems the depositary of the vengeance of his race; and though the long habit of brooding over daily insults and injuries has crusted over his temper with inveterate misanthropy, and hardened him against the contempt of mankind, this adds but little to the triumphant pretensions of his enemies. There is a strong, quick, and deep sense of justice mixed up with the gall and bitterness of his resentment. The constant apprehension of being burnt alive, plundered, banished, reviled and trampled on, might be supposed to sour the most forbearing nature, and to take something from that "milk of human kindness," with which his persecutors contemplated his indignities. The desire of revenge is almost inseparable from the sense of wrong; and we can hardly help sympathizing with the proud spirit, hid beneath his "Jewish gaberdine," stung to madness by repeated undeserved provocations, and laboring to throw off the load of obloquy and oppression heaped upon him and all his tribe by

one desperate act of "lawful" revenge, till the ferociousness of the means by which he is to execute his purpose, and the pertinacity with which he adheres to it, turn us against him; but even at last, when disappointed of the sanguinary revenge with which he had glutted his hopes, and exposed to beggary and contempt by the letter of the law on which he had insisted with so little remorse, we pity him and think him hardly dealt with by his judges. In all his answers and retorts upon his adversaries, he has the best not only of the argument but of the question, reasoning on their own principles and practice. They are so far from allowing of any measure of equal dealing, of common justice or humanity between themselves and the Jew, tha even when they come to ask a favor of him, and Shylock re minds them that "on such a day they spit upon him, another spurned him, another called him dog, and for these courtesie request he'll lend them so much monies"—Anthonio, his old enemy, instead of any acknowledgment of the shrewdness and justice of his remonstrance, which would have been preposterous in a respectable Catholic merchant in those times, threatens him with a repetition of the same treatment—

> "I am as like to call thee so again,
> To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too."

After this, the appeal to the Jew's mercy, as if there were any common principle of right and wrong between them, is the rankest hypocrisy, or the blindest prejudice; and the Jew's answer to one of Anthonio's friends, who asks him what his pound of forfeit flesh is good for, is irresistible—

"To bait fish withal; if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgrac'd me, and hindered me of half a million, laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorn'd my nation, thwarted my bargains, cool'd my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes; hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer that a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If

we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? why revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."

The whole of the trial-scene, both before and after the entrance of Portia, is a master-piece of dramatic skill. The legal acuteness, the passionate declamations, the sound maxims of jurisprudence, the wit and irony interspersed in it, the fluctuations of hope and fear in the different persons, and the completeness and suddenness of the catastrophe, cannot be surpassed. Shylock, who is his own counsel, defends himself well, and is triumphant on all the general topics that are urged against him, and only fails through a legal flaw. Take the following as an instance:—

> "Shylock. What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
> You have among you many a purchas'd slave,
> Which, like your asses, and your dogs, and mules,
> You use in abject and in slavish part,
> Because you bought them:—shall I say to you,
> Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
> Why sweat they under burdens? let their beds
> Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
> Be season'd with such viands? you will answer,
> The slaves are ours:—so do I answer you:
> The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
> Is dearly bought, is mine, and I will have it:
> If you deny me, fie upon your law!
> There is no force in the decrees of Venice:
> I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?"

The keenness of his revenge awakes all his faculties; and he beats back all opposition to his purpose, whether grave or gay, whether of wit or argument, with an equal degree of earnestness and self-possession. His character is displayed as distinctly in other less prominent parts of the play, and we may collect from a few sentences the history of his life—his descent and origin, his thrift and domestic economy, his affection for his daughter, whom he loves next to his wealth, his courtship and his first present to Leah, his wife! "I would not have parted with it" (the ring

which he first gave her) "for a wilderness of monkies!" What a fine Hebraism is implied in this expression!

Portia is not a very great favorite with us; neither are we in love with her maid, Nerissa. Portia has a certain degree of affectation and pedantry about her, which is very unusual in Shakspeare's women, but which perhaps was a proper qualification for the office of a "civil doctor," which she undertakes and executes so successfully. The speech about Mercy is very well; but there are a thousand finer ones in Shakspeare. We do not admire the scene of the caskets; and object entirely to the Black Prince Morocchius. We should like Jessica better if she had not deceived and robbed her father, and Lorenzo, if he had not married a Jewess, though he thinks he has a right to wrong a Jew. The dialogue between this newly-married couple by moonlight, beginning "On such a night," &c., is a collection of classical elegancies. Launcelot, the Jew's man, is an honest fellow. The dilemma in which he describes himself placed between his "conscience and the fiend," the one of which advises him to run away from his master's service and the other to stay in it, is exquisitely humorous.

Gratiano is a very admirable subordinate character. He is the jester of the piece: yet one speech of his, in his own defence, contains a whole volume of wisdom.

"ANTHONIO. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage, where every one must play his part;
And mine a sad one.
GRATIANO. Let me play the fool:
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come;
And let my liver rather heat with wine,
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans,
Why should a man whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
Sleep when he wakes? and creep into the jaundice
By being peevish? I tell thee what, Anthonio—
I love thee, and it is my love that speaks:—
There are a sort of men, whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond:
And do a wilful stillness entertain,
With purpose to be drest in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;

As who should say, *I am Sir Oracle,*
And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark!
O, my Anthonio, I do know of these,
That therefore only are reputed wise,
For saying nothing; who, I am very sure,
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears,
Which hearing them, would call their brothers, fools.
I'll tell thee more of this another time:
But fish not, with this melancholy bait,
For this fool's gudgeon, this opinion."

Gratiano's speech on the philosophy of love, and the effect of habit in taking off the force of passion, is as full of spirit and good sense. The graceful winding up of this play in the fifth act, after the tragic business is despatched, is one of the happiest instances of Shakspeare's knowledge of the principles of the drama. We do not mean the pretended quarrel between Portia and Nerissa and their husbands about the rings, which is amusing enough, but the conversation just before and after the return of Portia to her own house, beginning, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank," and ending "Peace! how the moon sleeps with Endymion and would not be awaked." There is a number of beautiful thoughts crowded into that short space, and linked together by the most natural transitions.

When we first went to see Mr. Kean in Shylock, we expected to see, what we had been used to see, a decrepid old man, bent with age and ugly with mental deformity, grinning with deadly malice, with the venom of his heart congealed in the expression of his countenance, sullen, morose, gloomy, inflexible, brooding over one idea, that of his hatred, and fixed on one unalterable purpose, that of his revenge. We were disappointed, because we had taken our idea from other actors, not from the play. There is no proof there that Shylock is old, but a single line, "Bassanio and *old* Shylock, both stand forth,"—which does not imply that he is infirm with age—and the circumstance that he has a daughter marriageable, which does not imply that he is old at all. It would be too much to say that his body should be made crooked and deformed to answer to his mind, which is bowed down and warped with prejudices and passion. That he has but one idea, is not true; he has more ideas than any other per-

son in the piece; and if he is intense and inveterate in the pursuit of his purpose, he shows the utmost elasticity, vigor, and presence of mind, in the means of attaining it. But so rooted was our habitual impression of the part from seeing it caricatured in the representation, that it was only from a careful perusal of the play itself that we saw our error. The stage is not in general the best place to study our author's characters in. It is too often filled with traditional common-place conceptions of the part, handed down from sire to son, and suited to the taste of *the great vulgar and the small*.—"'Tis an unweeded garden: things rank and gross do merely gender in it!" If a man of genius comes once in an age to clear away the rubbish, to make it fruitful and wholesome, they cry, "'Tis a bad school: it may be like nature, it may be like Shakspeare, but it is not like us." Admirable critics!

THE WINTER'S TALE.

We wonder that Mr. Pope should have entertained doubts of the genuineness of this play. He was, we suppose, shocked (as a certain critic suggests) at the Chorus, Time, leaping over sixteen years with his crutch between the third and fourth act, and at Antigonus's landing with the infant Perdita on the sea-coast of Bohemia. These slips or blemishes, however, do not prove it not to be Shakspeare's; for he was as likely to fall into them as anybody; but we do not know anybody but himself who could produce the beauties. The *stuff* of which the tragic passion is composed, the romantic sweetness, the comic humor, are evidently his. Even the crabbed and tortuous style of the speeches of Leontes, reasoning on his own jealousy, beset with doubts and fears, and entangled more and more in the thorny labyrinth, bears every mark of Shakspeare's peculiar manner of conveying the painful struggle of different thoughts and feelings, laboring for utterance, and almost strangled in the birth. For instance:—

> "Ha' not you seen, Camillo?
> (But that's past doubt; you have, or your eye-glass
> Is thicker than a cuckold's horn) or heard?
> (For to a vision so apparent, rumor
> Cannot be mute) or thought (for cogitation
> Resides not within man that does not think)
> My wife is slippery? if thou wilt confess,
> Or else be impudently negative,
> To have nor eyes, nor ears, nor thought."

Here Leontes is confounded with his passion, and does not know which way to turn himself, to give words to the anguish, rage, and apprehension, which tug at his breast. It is only as

he is worked up into a clearer conviction of his wrongs by insisting on the grounds of his unjust suspicions to Camillo, who irritates him by his opposition, that he bursts out into the following vehement strain of bitter indignation: yet even here his passion staggers, and is as it were oppressed with its own intensity.

> "Is whispering nothing?
> Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
> Kissing with inside lip? stopping the career
> Of laughter with a sigh? (a note infallible
> Of breaking honesty!) horsing foot on foot?
> Skulking in corners? wishing clocks more swift?
> Hours, minutes? the noon, midnight? and all eyes
> Blind with the pin and web, but theirs; theirs only,
> That would, unseen, be wicked? is this nothing?
> Why then the world, and all that's in 't, is nothing,
> The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia's nothing,
> My wife is nothing."

The character of Hermione is as much distinguished by its saint-like resignation and patient forbearance, as that of Paulina is by her zealous and spirited remonstrances against the injustice done to the queen, and by her devoted attachment to her misfortunes. Hermione's restoration to her husband and her child, after her long separation from them, is as affecting in itself as it is striking in the representation. Camillo, and the old shepherd and his son, are subordinate but not uninteresting instruments in the development of the plot, and though last, not least, comes Autolycus, a very pleasant, thriving rogue; and (what is the best feather in the cap of all knavery) he escapes with impunity in the end.

The Winter's Tale is one of the best-acting of our author's plays. We remember seeing it with great pleasure many years ago. It was on the night that King took leave of the stage, when he and Mrs. Jordan played together in the after-piece of the Wedding-day. Nothing could go off with more *eclat*, with more spirit, and grandeur of effect. Mrs. Siddons played Hermione, and in the last scene acted the painted statue to the life —with true monumental dignity and noble passion; Mr. Kemble in Leontes worked himself up into a very fine classical

phrensy; and Bannister, as Autolycus, roared as loud for pity as a sturdy beggar could do who felt none of the pain he counterfeited, and was sound of wind and limb. We shall never see these parts so acted again; or if we did, it would be in vain. Actors grow old, or no longer surprise us by their novelty. But true poetry, like nature, is always young; and we still read the courtship of Florizel and Perdita, as we welcome the return of spring, with the same feelings as ever

"FLORIZEL. Thou dearest Perdita,
With these forc'd thoughts, I pr'ythee darken not
The mirth o' the feast: or I'll be thine, my fair,
Or not my father's: for I cannot be
Mine own or anything to any, if
I be not thine. To this I am most constant.
Tho' destiny say, no. Be merry, gentle;
Strangle such thoughts as these, with anything
That you behold the while. Your guests are coming:
Lift up your countenance; as it were the day
Of celebration of that nuptial, which
We two have sworn shall come.
PERDITA. O lady fortune,
Stand you auspicious!

Enter Shepherd, Clown, MOPSA, DORCAS, *Servants; with* POLIXENES, *and* CAMILLO, *disguised.*

FLORIZEL. See, your guests approach:
Address yourself to entertain them sprightly,
And let's be red with mirth.
SHEPHERD. Fie, daughter! when my old wife liv'd, upon
This day, she was both pantler, butler, cook;
Both dame and servant: welcom'd all, serv'd all:
Would sing her song, and dance her turn: now here
At upper end o' the table, now i' the middle:
On his shoulder, and his: her face o' the fire
With labor; and the thing she took to quench it
She would to each one sip. You are retir'd,
As if you were a feasted one, and not
The hostess of the meeting. Pray you, bid
These unknown friends to us welcome; for it is
A way to make us better friends, more known.
Come, quench your blushes; and present yourself
That which you are, mistress o' the feast. Come on,

And bid us welcome to your sheep-shearing,
As your good flock shall prosper.

PERDITA. Sir, welcome!

[*To* POLIXENES *and* CAMILLO

It is my father's will I should take on me
The hostess-ship o' the day: you 're welcome, sir!
Give me those flowers there, Dorcas.—Reverend sirs,
For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
Seeming, and savor, all the winter long:
Grace and remembrance be unto you both,
And welcome to our shearing!

POLIXENES. Shepherdess
(A fair one are you), well you fit our ages
With flowers of winter.

PERDITA. Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death, nor on the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' the season
Are our carnations, and streak'd gilly-flowers,
Which some call nature's bastards: of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
To get slips of them.

POLIXENES. Wherefore, gentle maiden,
Do you neglect them?

PERDITA. For I have heard it said
There is an art, which, in their piedness, shares
With great creating nature.

POLIXENES. Say, there be:
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean: so, o'er that art
Which, you say, adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scyon to the wildest stock;
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather: but
The art itself is nature.

PERDITA. So it is.

POLIXENES. Then make your garden rich in gilly-flowers,
And do not call them bastards.

PERDITA. I'll not put
The dibble in earth, to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say, 'twere well; and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.—Here's flowers for you,
Hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram;
The marigold, that goes to bed with the sun,

And with him rises, weeping: these are flowers
Of middle summer, and, I think, they are given
To men of middle age. You are very welcome.

CAMILLO. I should leave grazing, were I of your flock,
And only live by gazing.

PERDITA. Out, alas!
You'd be so lean, that blasts of January
Would blow you through and through. Now, my fairest friends
I would I had some flowers o' the spring, that might
Become your time of day; and your's, and your's,
That wear upon your virgin branches yet
Your maiden-heads growing: O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that frighted, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty: violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength (a malady
Most incident to maids); bold oxlips, and
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The fleur-de-lis being one! O, these I lack
To make you garlands of; and, my sweet friend,
To strow him o'er and o'er.

FLORIZEL. What, like a corse?

PERDITA. No, like a bank, for love to lie and play on:
Not like a corse: or if—not to be buried,
But quick, and in mine arms. Come, take your flowers:
Methinks, I play as I have seen them do
In Whitsun pastorals: sure this robe of mine
Does change my disposition.

FLORIZEL. What you do,
Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so; so, give alms;
Pray, so; and for the ordering your affairs,
To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that: move still, still so,
And own no other function. Each your doing,
So singular in each particular,
Crowns what you're doing in the present deeds,
That all your acts are queens.

PERDITA. O Doricles,
Your praises are too large; but that your youth

And the true blood, which peeps forth fairly through it,
Do plainly give you out an unstained shepherd;
With wisdom I might fear, my Doricles,
You woo'd me the false way.
FLORIZEL. I think you have
As little skill to fear, as I have purpose
To put you to 't. But come, our dance, I pray:
Your hand, my Perdita: so turtles pair,
That never mean to part.
PERDITA. I'll swear for 'em
POLIXENES. This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the green-sward; nothing she does, or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place.
CAMILLO. He tells her something
That makes her blood look out: good sooth she is
The queen of curds and cream.'

This delicious scene is interrupted by the father of the prince discovering himself to Florizel, and haughtily breaking off the intended match between his son and Perdita. When Polixenes goes out, Perdita says,

"Even here undone:
I was not much afraid; for once or twice
I was about to speak; and tell him plainly,
The self-same sun that shines upon his court,
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on't alike. Wilt please you, sir, begone?
[*To* FLORIZEL
I told you what would come of this. Beseech you,
Of your own state take care: this dream of mine,
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
But milk my ewes and weep."

As Perdita, the supposed shepherdess, turns out to be the daughter of Hermione, and a princess in disguise, both feelings of the pride of birth and the claims of nature are satisfied by the fortunate event of the story, and the fine romance of poetry is reconciled to the strictest court etiquette.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

All's Well that ends Well is one of the most pleasing of our author's comedies. The interest is however more of a serious than of a comic nature. The character of Helen is one of great sweetness and delicacy. She is placed in circumstances of the most critical kind, and has to court her husband both as a virgin and a wife: yet the most scrupulous nicety of female modesty is not once violated. There is not one thought or action that ought to bring a blush into her cheeks, or that for a moment lessens her in our esteem. Perhaps the romantic attachment of a beautiful and virtuous girl to one placed above her hopes by the circumstances of birth and fortune, was never so exquisitely expressed as in the reflections which she utters when young Roussillon leaves his mother's house, under whose protection she has been brought up with him, to repair to the French king's court.

"Helena. Oh, were that all—I think not on my father,
And these great tears grace his remembrance more
Than those I shed for him. What was he like?
I have forgot him. My imagination
Carries no favor in it, but my Bertram's.
I am undone, there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. It were all one
That I should love a bright particular star,
And think to wed it; he is so above me:
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
Th' ambition in my love thus plagues itself;
The hind that would be mated by the lion,
Must die for love. 'Twas pretty, tho' a plague,

To see him every hour, to sit and draw
His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls
In our heart's table: heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favor.
But now he's gone, and my idolatrous fancy
Must sanctify his relics."

The interest excited by this beautiful picture of a fond and innocent heart is kept up afterwards by her resolution to follow him to France, the success of her experiment in restoring the king's health, her demanding Bertram in marriage as a recompense, his leaving her in disdain, her interview with him afterwards disguised as Diana, a young lady whom he importunes with his secret addresses, and their final reconciliation when the consequences of her stratagem and the proofs of her love are fully made known. The persevering gratitude of the French king to his benefactress, who cures him of a languishing distemper by a prescription hereditary in her family, the indulgent kindness of the Countess, whose pride of birth yields, almost without a struggle, to her affection for Helen, the honesty and uprightness of the good old lord Lafeu, make very interesting parts of the picture. The wilful stubbornness and youthful petulance of Bertram are also very admirably described. The comic part of the play turns on the folly, boasting, and cowardice of Parolles, a parasite and hanger-on of Bertram's, the detection of whose false pretensions to bravery and honor forms a very amusing episode. He is first found out by the old lord Lafeu, who says, "The soul of this man is in his clothes;" and it is proved afterwards that his heart is in his tongue, and that both are false and hollow. The adventure of "the bringing off of his drum" has become proverbial as a satire on all ridiculous and blustering undertakings which the person never means to perform: nor can anything be more severe than what one of the bystanders remarks upon what Parolles says of himself, "Is it possible he should know what he is, and be that he is?" Yet Parolles himself gives the best solution of the difficulty afterwards when he is thankful to escape with his life and the loss of character; for, so that he can live on, he is by no means squeamish about the loss of pretensions, to which he had sense

enough to know he had no real claim, and which he had assumed only as a means to live.

> "PAROLLES. Yet I am thankful: if my heart were great,
> 'Twould burst at this. Captain I'll be no more
> But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft
> As captain shall. Simply the thing I am
> Shall make me live: who knows himself a braggart
> Let him fear this; for it shall come to pass,
> That every braggart shall be found an ass.
> Rust sword, cool blushes, and Parolles live
> Safest in shame; being fool'd, by fool'ry thrive;
> There's place and means for every man alive
> I'll after them."

The story of ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL and of several others of Shakspeare's plays, is taken from Boccaccio. The poet has dramatised the original novel with great skill and comic spirit, and has preserved all the beauty of character and sentiment without *improving upon* it, which was impossible. There is indeed in Boccaccio's serious pieces a truth, a pathos, and an exquisite refinement of sentiment, which is hardly to be met with in any prose writer whatever. Justice has not been done him by the world. He has in general passed for a mere narrator of lascivious tales or idle jests. This character probably originated in his obnoxious attacks on the monks, and has been kept up by the grossness of mankind, who revenged their own want of refinement on Boccaccio, and only saw in his writings what suited the coarseness of their own tastes. But the truth is, that he has carried sentiment of every kind to its very highest purity and perfection. By sentiment we would here understand the habitual workings of some one powerful feeling, where the heart reposes almost entirely upon itself, without the violent excitement of opposing duties or untoward circumstances. In this way, nothing ever came up to the story of Frederigo Alberigi and his Falcon. The perseverance in attachment, the spirit of gallantry and generosity displayed in it, has no parallel in the history of heroical sacrifices. The feeling is so unconscious too, and involuntary, is brought out in such small, unlooked-for, and unostentatious circumstances, as to show it to have been woven

into the very nature and soul of the author. The story of Isabella is scarcely less fine, and is more affecting in the circumstances and in the catastrophe. Dryden has done justice to the impassioned eloquence of the Tancred and Sigismunda; but has not given an adequate idea of the wild preternatural interest of the story of Honoria. Cimon and Iphigenia is by no means one of the best, notwithstanding the popularity of the subject. The proof of unaltered affection given in the story of Jeronymo, and the simple touches of nature and picturesque beauty in the story of the two lovers, who were poisoned by tasting of a leaf in the garden at Florence, are perfect master-pieces. The epithet of Divine was well bestowed on this great painter of the human heart. The invention implied in his different tales is immense: but we are not to infer that it is all his own. He probably availed himself of all the common traditions which were floating about in his time, and which he was the first to appropriate. Homer appears the most original of all authors—probably for no other reason than that we can trace the plagiarism no farther. Boccaccio has furnished subjects to numberless writers since his time, both dramatic and narrative. The story of Griselda is borrowed from his Decameron by Chaucer; as is the Knight's Tale (Palamon and Arcite) from his poem of the Theseid.

LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST.

If we were to part with any of the author's comedies, it should be this. Yet we should be loth to part with Don Adriano de Armado, that mighty potentate of nonsense, or his page, that handful of wit; with Nathaniel the curate, or Holofernes the school-master, and their dispute after dinner on "the golden cadences of poesy;" with Costard the clown, or Dull the constable. Biron is too accomplished a character to be lost to the world, and yet he could not appear without his fellow courtiers and the king: and if we were to leave out the ladies, the gentlemen would have no mistresses. So that we believe we may let the whole play stand as it is, and we shall hardly venture to "set a mark of reprobation on it." Still we have some objections to the style, which we think savors more of the pedantic spirit of Shakspeare's time than of his own genius; more of controversial divinity, and the logic of Peter Lombard, than of the inspiration of the Muse. It transports us quite as much to the manners of the court, and the quirks of courts of law, as to the scenes of nature or the fairy-land of his own imagination. Shakspeare has set himself to imitate the tone of polite conversation then prevailing among the fair, the witty, and the learned, and he has imitated it but too faithfully. It is as if the hand of Titian had been employed to give grace to the curls of a full-bottomed periwig, or Raphael had attempted to give expression to the tapestry figures in the House of Lords. Shakspeare has put an excellent description of this fashionable jargon into the mouth of the critical Holofernes, "as too picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, too peregrinate, as I may call it;" and nothing can be more marked than the difference when he

breaks loose from the trammels he had imposed on himself, "as light as bird from brake," and speaks in his own person. We think, for instance, that in the following soliloquy the poet has fairly got the start of Queen Elizabeth and her maids of honor :—

> "Biron. O! and I forsooth in love,
> I that have been love's whip;
> A very beadle to an amorous sigh:
> A critic; nay, a night-watch constable,
> A domineering pedant o'er the boy,
> Than whom no mortal more magnificent.
> This whimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy,
> This signior Junio, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid,
> Regent of love-rhimes, lord of folded arms,
> The anointed sovereign of sighs and groans:
> Liege of all loiterers and malecontents,
> Dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces,
> Sole imperator, and great general
> Of trotting parators (O my little heart!)
> And I to be a corporal of his field,
> And wear his colors like a tumbler's hoop!
> What? I love! I sue! I seek a wife!
> A woman, that is like a German clock,
> Still a repairing; ever out of frame;
> And never going aright, being a watch,
> And being watch'd that it may still go right!
> Nay, to be perjur'd, which is worst of all:
> And among three to love the worst of all,
> A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
> With two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes;
> Ay, and by heav'n, one that will do the deed,
> Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard;
> And I to sigh for her! to watch for her!
> To pray for her! Go to; it is a plague
> That Cupid will impose for my neglect
> Of his almighty, dreadful little might.
> Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue, and groan:
> Some men must love my lady, and some Joan."

The character of Biron drawn by Rosaline and that which Biron gives of Boyet are equally happy. The observations on the use and abuse of study, and on the power of beauty to quicken the understanding as well as the senses, are excellent. The scene which has the greatest dramatic effect is that in which

Biron, the king, Longaville, and Dumain, successively detect each other and are detected in their breach of their vow and in their profession of attachment to their several mistresses, in which they suppose themselves to be overheard by no one. The reconciliation between these lovers and their sweethearts is also very good, and the penance which Rosaline imposes on Biron, before he can expect to gain her consent to marry him, full of propriety and beauty.

> "Rosaline. Oft have I heard of you, my lord Biron,
> Before I saw you: and the world's large tongue
> Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks;
> Full of comparisons, and wounding flouts;
> Which you on all estates will execute,
> That lie within the mercy of your wit.
> To weed this wormwood from your faithful brain;
> And therewithal to win me, if you please
> (Without the which I am not to be won),
> You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
> Visit the speechless sick, and still converse
> With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,
> With all the fierce endeavor of your wit,
> T' enforce the pained impotent to smile," &c.

The famous cuckoo-song closes the play: but we shall add no more criticisms: "the words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

This admirable comedy used to be frequently acted till of late years. Mr. Garrick's Benedick was one of his most celebrated characters: and Mrs. Jordan, we have understood, played Beatrice very delightfully. The serious part is still the most prominent here, as in other instances that we have noticed. Hero is the principal figure in the piece, and leaves an indelible impression on the mind by her beauty, her tenderness, and the hard trial of her love. The passage in which Claudio first makes a confession of his affection towards her, conveys as pleasing an image of the entrance of love into a youthful bosom as can well be imagined.

> "Oh, my lord,
> When you went onward with this ended action,
> I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
> That lik'd, but had a rougher task in hand
> Than to drive liking to the name of love;
> But now I am return'd, and that war-thoughts
> Have left their places vacant; in their rooms
> Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
> All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
> Saying, I lik'd her ere I went to wars."

In the scene at the altar, when Claudio, urged on by the villain Don John, brings the charge of incontinence against her, and as it were divorces her in the very marriage-ceremony, her appeals to her own conscious innocence and honor are made with the most affecting simplicity.

> 'Claudio. No, Leonato,
> I never tempted her with word too large,

But, as a brother to his sister, show'd
Bashful sincerity, and comely love.
HERO. And seem'd I ever otherwise to you
CLAUDIO. Out on thy seeming, I will write against it:
You seem to me as Dian in her orb,
As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown:
But you are more intemperate in your blood
Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals
That rage in savage sensuality.
HERO. Is my lord well, that he doth speak so wide.
LEONATO. Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?
JOHN. Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.
BENEDICK. This looks not like a nuptial.
HERO. True! O God!"

The justification of Hero in the end, and her restoration to the confidence and arms of her lover, is brought about by one of those temporary consignments to the grave of which Shakspeare seems to have been fond. He has perhaps explained the theory of this predilection in the following lines:—

"FRIAR. She dying, as it must be so maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accus'd,
Shall be lamented, pity'd, and excus'd,
Of every hearer: for it so falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth,
While we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,
Why then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue, that possession would not show us
Whilst it was ours.—So will it fare with Claudio:
When he shall hear she dy'd upon his words,
The idea of her love shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination;
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparel'd in more precious habit,
More moving, delicate, and full of life,
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,
Than when she liv'd indeed."

The principal comic characters in MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, Benedick and Beatrice, are both essences in their kind. His character as a woman-hater is admirably supported, and his conversion to matrimony is no less happily effected by the pretended story of Beatrice's love for him. It is hard to say which

of the two scenes is the best, that of the trick which is thus practised on Benedick, or that in which Beatrice is prevailed on to take pity on him by overhearing her cousin and her maid declare (which they do on purpose) that he is dying of love for her. There is something delightfully picturesque in the manner in which Beatrice is described as coming to hear the plot which is contrived against herself—

> "For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs
> Close by the ground, to hear our conference."

In consequence of what she hears (not a word of which is true) she exclaims, when these good-natured informants are gone,

> "What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
> Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?
> Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride adieu!
> No glory lives behind the back of such.
> And, Benedick, love on, I will requite thee;
> Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand;
> If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
> To bind our loves up in an holy band:
> For others say thou dost deserve; and I
> Believe it better than reportingly."

And Benedick, on his part, is equally sincere in his repentance, with equal reason, after he has heard the grey-beard, Leonato, and his friend, "Monsieur Love," discourse of the desperate state of his supposed inamorata.

"This can be no trick; the conference was sadly borne.—They have the truth of this from Hero They seem to pity the lady; it seems her affections have the full bent. Love me! why, it must be requited. I hear how I am censur'd: they say, I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her; they say too, that she will rather die than give any sign of affection.—I did never think to marry: I must not seem proud:—happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending. They say, the lady is fair; 't is a truth, I can bear them witness: and virtuous;—'t is so, I cannot reprove it: and wise—but for loving me:—by my troth it is no addition to her wit;—nor no great argument of her folly, for I will be horribly in love with her.—I may chance to have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have rail'd so long against marriage

but doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.—Shall quips, and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain, awe a man from the career of his humor? No: the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married.—Here comes Beatrice: by this day, she's a fair lady: I do spy some marks of love in her."

The beauty of all this arises from the characters of the persons so entrapped. Benedick is a professed and staunch enemy to marriage, and gives very plausible reasons for the faith that is in him. And as to Beatrice, she persecutes him all day with her jests (so that he could hardly think of being troubled with them at night), she turns him and all other things into ridicule, and is proof against everything serious:—

"HERO. Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes
Misprising what they look on; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak: she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endeared.
URSULA. Sure, I think so;
And therefore, certainly, it were not good
She knew his love, lest she make sport at it.
HERO. Why, you speak truth: I never yet saw man,
How wise, how noble, young, how rarely featur'd,
But she would spell him backward: if fair-fac'd,
She'd swear the gentleman should be her sister;
If black, why, nature, drawing of an antick,
Made a foul blot: if tall, a lance ill-headed;
If low, an agate very vilely cut:
If speaking, why, a vane blown with all winds;
If silent, why, a block moved with none.
So turns she every man the wrong side out;
And never gives to truth and virtue that
Which simpleness and merit purchaseth."

These were happy materials for Shakspeare to work on, and he has made a happy use of them. Perhaps that middle point of comedy was never more nicely hit in which the ludicrous blends with the tender, and our follies, turning round against themselves in support of our affections, retain nothing but their humanity.

Dogberry and Verges in this play are inimitable specimens of quaint blundering and misprisions of meaning; and are a standing record of that formal gravity of pretension and total want of common understanding, which Shakspeare no doubt copied from real life, and which in the course of two hundred years appear to have ascended from the lowest to the highest offices in the state.

AS YOU LIKE IT

SHAKSPEARE has here converted the forest of Arden into another Arcadia, where they "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world." It is the most ideal of any of this author's plays. It is a pastoral drama, in which the interest arises more out of the sentiments and characters than out of the actions or situations. It is not what is done, but what is said, that claims our attention. Nursed in solitude, "under the shade of melancholy boughs," the imagination grows soft and delicate, and the wit runs riot in idleness, like a spoiled child, that is never sent to school. Caprice and fancy reign and revel here, and stern necessity is banished to the court. The mild sentiments of humanity are strengthened with thought and leisure; the echo of the cares and noise of the world strikes upon the ear of those "who have felt them knowingly," softened by time and distance. "They hear the tumult, and are still." The very air of the place seems to breathe a spirit of philosophical poetry; to stir the thoughts, to touch the heart with pity, as the drowsy forest rustles to the sighing gale. Never was there such beautiful moralising, equally free from pedantry or petulance.

> "And this their life, exempt from public haunts,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Jaques is the only purely contemplative character in Shakspeare. He thinks and does, nothing. His whole occupation is to amuse his mind, and he is totally regardless of his body and his fortunes. He is the prince of philosophical idlers; his

only passion is thought; he sets no value upon anything, but as it serves as food for reflection. He can "suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs;" the motley fool, "who morals on the time," is the greatest prize he meets with in the forest. He resents Orlando's passion for Rosalind as some disparagement of his own passion for abstract truth: and leaves the Duke as soon as he is restored to his sovereignty, to seek his brother out who has quitted it, and turned hermit.

—"Out of these convertites
There is much matter to be heard and learnt."

Within the sequestered and romantic glades of the forest of Arden, they find leisure to be good and wise, or to play the fool and fall in love. Rosalind's character is made up of sportive gaiety and natural tenderness: her tongue runs the faster to conceal the pressure at her heart. She talks herself out of breath, only to get deeper in love. The coquetry with which she plays with her lover in the double character which she has to support is managed with the nicest address. How full of voluble, laughing grace is all her conversation with Orlando—

—"In heedless mazes running
With wanton haste and giddy cunning."

How full of real fondness and pretended cruelty is her answer to him when he promises to love her "For ever and day!"

"Say a day without the ever: no, no, Orlando, men are April when they woo, December when they wed; maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives: I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen; more clamorous than a parrot against rain; more new-fangled than an ape; more giddy in my desires than a monkey; I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain, and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry; I will laugh like a hyen and that when you are inclined to sleep.

Orlando. But will my Rosalind do so?
Rosalind. By my life she will do as I do."

The silent and retired character of Celia is a necessary relief to the provoking loquacity of Rosalind, nor can anything be better conceived or more beautifully described than the mutual affection between the two cousins.

> — "We still have slept together,
> Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together,
> And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,
> Still we went coupled and inseparable."

The unrequited love of Silvius for Phebe shows the perversity of this passion in the commonest scenes of life, and the rubs and stops which nature throws in its way, where fortune has placed none. Touchstone is not in love, but he will have a mistress as a subject for the exercise of his grotesque humor, and to show his contempt for the passion, by his indifference about the person. He is a rare fellow. He is a mixture of the ancient cynic philosopher with the modern buffoon, and turns folly into wit, and wit into folly, just as the fit takes him. His courtship of Aubrey not only throws a degree of ridicule on the state of wedlock itself, but he is equally an enemy to the prejudices of opinion in other respects. The lofty tone of enthusiasm which the Duke and his companion in exile spread over the stillness and solitude of a country life, receives a pleasant shock from Touchstone's skeptical determination of the question.

> "Corin. And how like you this shepherd's life, Mr. Touchstone?
> Clown. Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. In respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humor; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach."

Zimmerman's celebrated work on Solitude discovers only one *half* the sense of this passage.

There is hardly any of Shakspeare's plays that contains a greater number of passages that have been quoted in books of extracts, or a greater number of phrases that have become in a manner proverbial. If we were to give all the striking

passages, we should give half the play. We will only recall a few of the most delightful to the reader's recollection. Such are the meeting between Orlando and Adam, the exquisite appeal of Orlando to the humanity of the Duke and his company to supply him with food for the old man, and their answer, the Duke's description of a country life, and the account of Jaques moralising on the wounded deer, his meeting with Touchstone in the forest, his apology for his own melancholy and his satirical vein, and the well-known speech on the stages of human life, the old song of "Blow, blow, thou winter's wind," Rosalind's description of the marks of a lover and of the progress of time with different persons, the picture of the snake wreathed round Oliver's neck while the lioness watches her sleeping prey, and Touchstone's lecture to the shepherd, his defence of cuckolds, and panegyric on the virtues of "an If."—All of these are familiar to the reader: there is one passage of equal delicacy and beauty which may have escaped him, and with it we shall close our account of As you like it. It is Phebe's description of Ganimed, at the end of the third act.

"Think not I love him, tho' I ask for him;
'Tis but a peevish boy, yet he talks well;—
But what care I for words! yet words do well,
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.
It is a pretty youth; not very pretty;
But sure he's proud, and yet his pride becomes him;
He'll make a proper man: the best thing in him
Is his complexion; and faster than his tongue
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up:
He is not very tall, yet for his years he's tall;
His leg is but so so, and yet 'tis well:
There was a pretty redness in his lip,
A little riper, and more lusty red
Than that mix'd in his cheek; 'twas just the difference
Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask.
There be some women, Silvius, had they mark'd him
In parcels as I did, would have gone near
To fall in love with him: but for my part
I love him not, nor hate him not; and yet
I have more cause to hate him than to love him:
For what had he to do to chide at me?"

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

The Taming of the Shrew is almost the only one of Shakspeare's comedies that has a regular plot, and downright moral. It is full of bustle, animation, and rapidity of action. It shows admirably how self-will is only to be got the better of by stronger will, and how one degree of ridiculous perversity is only to be driven out by another still greater. Petruchio is a madman in his senses; a very honest fellow, who hardly speaks a word of truth, and succeeds in all his tricks and impostures. He acts his assumed character to the life, with the most fantastical extravagance, with complete presence of mind, with untired animal spirits, and without a particle of ill-humor from beginning to end. The situation of poor Katherine, worn out by his incessant persecutions, becomes at last almost as pitiable as it is ludicrous, and it is difficult to say which to admire most, the unaccountableness of his actions, or the unalterableness of his resolutions. It is a character which most husbands ought to study, unless perhaps the very audacity of Petruchio's attempt might alarm them more than his success would encourage them. What a sound must the following speech carry to some married ears

"Think you a little din can daunt my ears?
Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puff'd up with winds,
Rage like an angry boar, chafed with sweat?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field?
And heav'n's artillery thunder in the skies?
Have I not in a pitched battle heard
Loud larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets clang?
And do you tell me of a woman's tongue,

That gives not half so great a blow to hear,
As will a chesnut in a farmer's fire?"

Not all Petruchio's rhetoric would persuade more than "some dozen followers" to be of this heretical way of thinking. He unfolds his scheme for the *Taming of the Shrew*, on a principle of contradiction, thus:—

"I'll woo her with some spirit when she comes.
Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale;
Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses newly wash'd with dew;
Say she be mute, and will not speak a word,
Then I'll commend her volubility,
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence:
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks,
As tho' she bid me stay by her a week;
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day,
When I shall ask the banns, and when be married?

He accordingly gains her consent to the match, by telling her father that he has got it; disappoints her by not returning at the time he has promised to wed her, and when he returns, creates no small consternation by the oddity of his dress and equipage. This however is nothing to the astonishment excited by his mad-brained behavior at the marriage. Here is the account of it by an eye-witness:—

"Gremio. Tut, she's a lamb, a dove, a fool to him:
I'll tell you, Sir Lucentio; when the priest
Should ask if Katherine should be his wife?
Ay, by gog's woons, quoth he; and swore so loud,
That, all amaz'd, the priest let fall the book;
And as he stooped again to take it up,
This mad-brain'd bridegroom took him such a cuff,
That down fell priest and book, and book and priest.
Now take them up, quoth he, if any list.
Tranio. What said the wench when he rose up again?
Gremio. Trembled and shook; for why, he stamp'd and swore
As if the vicar meant to cozen him.
But after many ceremonies done,
He calls for wine: a health, quoth he; as if
He 'ad been aboard carousing with his mates

After a storm: quaft off the muscadel,
And threw the sops all in the sexton's face;
Having no other cause but that his beard
Grew thin and hungerly, and seem'd to ask
His sops as he was drinking. This done, he took
The bride about the neck, and kiss'd her lips
With such a clamorous smack, that at their parting
All the church echoed: and I seeing this,
Came thence for very shame; and after me,
I know, the rout is coming;
Such a mad marriage never was before!"

The most striking and at the same time laughable feature in the character of Petruchio throughout is the studied approximation to the intractable character of real madness, his apparent insensibility to all external considerations, and utter indifference to everything but the wild and extravagant freaks of his own self-will. There is no contending with a person on whom nothing makes an impression but his own purposes, and who is bent on his own whims just in proportion as they seem to want common sense. With him a thing's being plain and reasonable is a reason against it. The airs he gives himself are infinite, and his caprices as sudden as they are groundless. The whole of his treatment of his wife at home is in the same spirit of ironical attention and inverted gallantry. Everything flies before his will, like a conjuror's wand, and he only metamorphoses his wife's temper by metamorphosing her senses and all the objects she looks upon at a word's speaking. Such are his insisting that it is the moon, and not the sun, which they see, &c. This extravagance reaches its most pleasant and poetical height in the scene where, on their return to her father's, they meet old Vincentio, whom Petruchio immediately addresses as a young lady:

"PETRUCHIO. Good morrow, gentle mistress, where away?
Tell me, sweet Kate, and tell me truly too,
Hast thou beheld a fresher gentlewoman?
Such war of white and red within her cheeks;
What stars do spangle heaven with such beauty,
As those two eyes become that heavenly face?
Fair lovely maid, once more good day to thee:
Sweet Kate, embrace her for her beauty's sake.
HORTENSIO. He'll make the man mad to make a woman of him

KATHERINE. Young budding virgin, fair and fresh and sweet,
Whither away, or where is thy abode?
Happy the parents of so fair a child;
Happier the man whom favorable stars
Allot thee for his lovely bed-fellow.
PETRUCHIO. Why, how now, Kate, I hope thou art not mad:
This is a man, old, wrinkled, faded, wither'd,
And not a maiden, as thou say'st he is.
KATHERINE. Pardon, old father, my mistaken eyes,
That have been so bedazzled with the sun
That everything I look on seemeth green.
Now I perceive thou art a reverend father."

The whole is carried off with equal spirit, as if the poet's comic Muse had wings of fire. It is strange how one man could be so many things; but so it is. The concluding scene, in which trial is made of the obedience of the new-married wives (so triumphantly for Petruchio) is a very happy one.—In some parts of this play there is a little too much about music-masters and masters of philosophy. They were things of greater rarity in those days than they are now. Nothing, however, can be better than the advice which Tranio gives his master for the prosecution of his studies:—

"The mathematics, and the metaphysics,
Fall to them as you find your stomach serves you:
No profit grows, where is no pleasure ta'en:
In brief, sir, study what you most affect."

We have heard the *Honey-Moon* called "an elegant Katherine and Petruchio." We suspect we do not understand this word *elegant* in the sense that many people do. But in our sense of the word, we should call Lucentio's description of his mistress elegant:—

"Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,
And with her breath she did perfume the air:
Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her."

When Biondello tells the same Lucentio for his encouragement, "I knew a wench married in an afternoon as she went to the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit, and so may you, sir;"—there

is nothing elegant in this, and yet we hardly know which of the two passages is the best.

The Taming of the Shrew is a play within a play. It is supposed to be a play acted for the benefit of Sly the tinker, who is made to believe himself a lord, when he wakes after a drunken brawl. The character of Sly, and the remarks with which he accompanies the play, are as good as the play itself. His answer, when he is asked how he likes it, "Indifferent well; 'tis a good piece of work, would 'twere done," is in good keeping, as if he were thinking of his Saturday night's job. Sly does not change his tastes with his new situation, but in the midst of splendor and luxury still calls out lustily and repeatedly "for a pot o' the smallest ale." He is very slow in giving up his personal identity in his sudden advancement—"I am Christophero Sly, call me not honor nor lordship. I ne'er drank sack in my life: and if you give me any conserves, give me conserves of beef: ne'er ask me what raiment I'll wear, for I have no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet, nay, sometimes more feet than shoes, or such shoes as my toes look through the over-leather. What, would you make me mad? Am not I Christophero Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker? Ask Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not; if she say I am not fourteen-pence on the score for sheer ale, score me up for the lying'st knave in Christendom."

This is honest. "The Slies are no rogues," as he says of himself. We have a great predilection for this representative of the family; and what makes us like him the better is, that we take him to be of kin (not many degrees removed) to Sancho Panza.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

This is a play as full of genius as it is of wisdom. Yet there is an original sin in the nature of the subject, which prevents us from taking a cordial interest in it. "The height of moral argument" which the author has here maintained in the intervals of passion, or blended with the more powerful impulses of nature, is hardly surpassed in any of his plays. But there is in general a want of passion; the affections are at a stand; our sympathies are repulsed and defeated in all directions. The only passion which influences the story is that of Angelo; and yet he seems to have a much greater passion for hypocrisy than for his mistress. Neither are we greatly enamored of Isabella's rigid chastity, though she could not act otherwise than she did. We do not feel the same confidence in the virtue that is "sublimely good" at another's expense, as if it had been put to some less disinterested trial. As to the Duke, who makes a very imposing and mysterious stage-character, he is more absorbed in his own plots and gravity than anxious for the welfare of the state; more tenacious of his own character than attentive to the feelings and apprehensions of others. Claudio is the only person who feels naturally; and yet he is placed in circumstances of distress which almost preclude the wish for his deliverance. Mariana is also in love with Angelo, whom we hate. In this respect, there may be said to be a general system of cross-purposes between the feelings of the different characters and the sympathy of the reader or the audience. This principle of repugnance seems to have reached its height in the character of Master Barnardine, who not only sets at defiance the opinions of others, but has even thrown off all self-regard,—"one that apprehends

death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep; careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, and to come." He is a fine antithesis to the morality and hypocrisy of the other characters of the play. Barnardine is Caliban transported from Prospero's wizard island to the forests of Bohemia or the prisons of Vienna. He is a creature of bad habits, as Caliban is of gross instincts. He has, however, a strong notion of the natural fitness of things, according to his own sensations—"He has been drinking hard all night, and he will not be hanged that day"—and Shakspeare has let him off at last. We do not understand why the philosophical German critic, Schlegel, should be so severe on those pleasant persons, Lucio, Pompey, and Master Froth, as to call them "wretches." They appear all mighty comfortable in their occupations, and determined to pursue them, "as the flesh and fortune shall serve." A very good exposure of the want of self-knowledge and contempt for others, which is so common in this world, is put into the mouth of Abhorson, the jailor, when the Provost proposes to associate Pompey with him in his office—"A bawd, sir? Fie upon him, he will discredit our mystery." And the same answer would serve, in nine instances out of ten, to the same kind of remark, "Go to, sir, you weigh equally; a feather will turn the scale." Shakspeare was in one sense the least moral of all writers; for morality (commonly so called) is made up of antipathies; and his talent consisted in sympathy with human nature, in all its shapes, degrees, depressions, and elevations. The object of the pedantic moralist is to find out the bad in everything: his was to show that "there is some soul of goodness in things evil." Even Master Barnardine is not left to the mercy of what others think of him; but, when he comes in, speaks for himself, and pleads his own cause, as well as if counsel had been assigned him. In one sense, Shakspeare was no moralist at all: in another, he was the greatest of all moralists. He was a moralist in the same sense in which nature is one. He taught what he had learnt from her. He showed the greatest knowledge of humanity, with the greatest fellow-feeling for it.

One of the most dramatic passages in the present play is the interview between Claudio and his sister, when she comes to

inform him of the conditions on which Angelo will spare his life.

"CLAUDIO. Let me know the point.
ISABELLA. O, I do fear thee, Claudio: and I quake,
Lest thou a feverous life should'st entertain,
And six or seven winters more respect
Than a perpetual honor. Dar'st thou die?
The sense of death is most in apprehension;
And the poor beetle, that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies.
CLAUDIO. Why give you me this shame?
Think you I can a resolution fetch
From flowery tenderness; if I must die,
I will encounter darkness as a bride,
And hug it in mine arms.
ISABELLA. There spake my brother! there my father's grave
Did utter forth a voice! Yes, thou must die:
Thou art too noble to conserve a life
In base appliances. This outward-sainted deputy—
Whose settled visage and deliberate word
Nips youth i' the head, and follies doth emmew,
As falcon doth the fowl—is yet a devil.
CLAUDIO. The princely Angelo?
ISABELLA. Oh, 'tis the cunning livery of hell,
The damned'st body to invest and cover
In princely guards! Dost thou think, Claudio,
If I would yield him my virginity,
Thou might'st be freed?
CLAUDIO. Oh heavens! it cannot be.
ISABELLA. Yes, he would give it thee, for this rank offence,
So to offend him still: this night's the time
That I should do what I abhor to name,
Or else thou dy'st to morrow.
CLAUDIO. Thou shalt not do 't.
ISABELLA. Oh, were it but my life,
I'd throw it down for your deliverance
As frankly as a pin.
CLAUDIO. Thanks, dear Isabel.
ISABELLA Be ready, Claudio, for your death to-morrow
CLAUDIO. Yes.—Has he affections in him,
That thus can make him bite the law by the nose?
When he would force it, sure it is no sin;
Or of the deadly seven it is the least.
ISABELLA. Which is the least?

CLAUDIO. If it were damnable, he, being so wise,
Why would he for the momentary trick
Be perdurably fin'd? Oh, Isabel!
ISABELLA. What says my brother?
CLAUDIO. Death is a fearful thing.
ISABELLA. And shamed life a hateful.
CLAUDIO. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world; or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling!—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.
ISABELLA. Alas! alas!
CLAUDIO. Sweet sister, let me live.
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far,
That it becomes a virtue."

What adds to the dramatic beauty of this scene and the effect of Claudio's passionate attachment to life is, that it immediately follows the Duke's lecture to him, in the character of the Friar, recommending an absolute indifference to it.

— "Reason thus with life,—
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep: a breath thou art,
Servile to all the skyey influences
That do this habitation, where thou keep'st,
Hourly afflict: merely, thou art death's fool;
For him thou labor'st by thy flight to shun,
And yet run'st toward him still; thou art not noble,
For all the accommodations, that thou bear'st,
Are nurs'd by baseness: thou art by no means valiant;
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
Of a poor worm: thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provok'st; yet grossly fear'st

Thy death, which is no more. Thou art not thyself;
For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
That issue out of dust: happy thou art not;
For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get;
And what thou hast, forget'st; thou art not certain.
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects,
After the moon; if thou art rich, thou art poor;
For, like an ass, whose back with ingots bows,
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloads thee: friend thou hast none;
For thy own bowels which do call thee sire,
The mere effusion of thy proper loins,
Do curse the gout, serpigo, and the rheum,
For ending thee no sooner: thou hast nor youth, nor age,
But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,
Dreaming on both: for all thy blessed youth,
Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
Of palsied eld; and when thou art old and rich,
Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,
To make thy riches pleasant. What's yet in this,
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
Lie hid more thousand deaths; yet death we
That makes these odds all even."

THE

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR is no doubt a very amusing play, with a great deal of humor, character, and nature in it; but we should have liked it much better, if any one else had been the hero of it, instead of Falstaff. We could have been contented if Shakspeare had not been "commanded to show the knight in love." Wits and philosophers, for the most part, do not shine in that character; and Sir John himself, by no means, comes off with flying colors. Many people complain of the degradation and insults to which Don Quixote is so frequently exposed in his various adventures. But what are the unconscious indignities which he suffers, compared with the sensible mortifications which Falstaff is made to bring upon himself? What are the blows and buffetings which the Don receives from the staves of Yanguesian carriers, or from Sancho Panza's more hard-hearted hands, compared with the contamination of the buck-basket, the disguise of the fat woman of Brentford, and the horns of Herne the hunter, which are discovered on Sir John's head? In reading the play, we indeed wish him well through all these discomfitures, but it would have been as well if he had not got into them. Falstaff, in THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, is not the man he was in the two parts of *Henry IV.* His wit and eloquence have left him. Instead of making a butt of others, he is made a butt of by them. Neither is there a single particle of love in him to excuse his follies; he is merely a designing, bare-faced knave, and an unsuccessful one. The scene with Ford as Master Brook, and that with Simple, Slender's man,

who comes to ask after the Wise Woman, are almost the only ones in which his old intellectual ascendency appears. He is like a person recalled to the stage to perform an unaccustomed and ungracious part; and in which we perceive only "some faint sparks of those flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the hearers in a roar." But the single scene with Doll Tear-sheet, or Mrs. Quickly's account of his desiring "to eat some of housewife Keach's prawns," and telling her "to be no more so familiarity with such people," is worth the whole of THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR put together. Ford's jealousy, which is the mainspring of the comic incidents, is certainly very well managed. Page, on the contrary, appears to be somewhat uxorious in his disposition; and we have pretty plain indication of the effect of the characters of the husbands on the different degrees of fidelity in their wives. Mrs. Quickly makes a very lively go-between, both between Falstaff and his Dulcineas, and Anne Page and her lovers, and seems in the latter case so intent on her own interest as totally to overlook the intentions of her employers. Her master, Doctor Caius, the Frenchman, and her fellow-servant, Jack Rugby, are very completely described. This last-mentioned person is rather quaintly commended by Mrs. Quickly, as "an honest, willing, kind fellow, as ever servant shall come in house withal, and I warrant you, no tell-tale, nor no breed-bate: his worst fault is that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way; but nobody but has his fault." The Welsh Parson, Sir Hugh Evans (a title which in those days was given to the clergy), is an excellent character in all respects. He is as respectable as he is laughable. He has "very good discretions and very odd humors." The duel-scene with Caius gives him an opportunity to show his "cholers and his tremblings of mind," his valor and his melancholy, in an irresistible manner. In the dialogue, which at his mother's request he holds with his pupil, William Page, to show his progress in learning, it is hard to say whether the simplicity of the master or the scholar is the greatest. Nym, Bardolph, and Pistol, are but the shadows of what they were; and Justice Shallow himself has little of his consequence left. But his cousin, Slender, makes up for the deficiency. He is a very potent piece

of imbecility. In him the pretensions of the worthy Gloucestershire family are well kept up, and immortalised. He and his friend Sackerson, and his book of songs, and his love of Anne Page, and his having nothing to say to her, can never be forgotten. It is the only first-rate character in the play. Shakspeare is the only writer who was as great in describing weakness as strength.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS.

This comedy is taken very much from the Menœchmi of Plautus, and is not an improvement on it. Shakspeare appears to have bestowed no great pains on it, and there are but a few passages which bear the decided stamp of his genius. He seems to have relied on his author, and on the interest arising out of the intricacy of the plot. The curiosity excited is certainly very considerable, though not of the most pleasing kind. We are teazed as with a riddle, which notwithstanding we try to solve. In reading the play, from the sameness of the names of the two Antipholises and the two Dromios, as well from their being constantly taken for each other by those who see them, it is difficult, without a painful effort of attention, to keep the characters distinct in the mind. And again, on the stage, either the complete similarity of their persons and dress must produce the same perplexity whenever they first enter, or the identity of appearance which the story supposes will be destroyed. We still, however, having a clue to the difficulty, can tell which is which, merely from the practical contradictions which arise, as soon as the different parties begin to speak; and we are indemnified for the perplexity and blunders into which we are thrown by seeing others thrown into greater and almost inextricable ones. This play (among other considerations) leads us not to feel much regret that Shakspeare was not what is called a classical scholar. We do not think his *forte* would ever have lain in imitating or improving on what others invented, so much as in inventing for himself, and perfecting what he invented,—not perhaps by the omission of faults, but by the addition of the highest excellences. His own genius was strong enough to bear him up, and

he soared longest and best on unborrowed plumes. The only passage of a very Shakspearian cast in this comedy is the one in which the Abbess, with admirable characteristic artifice, makes Adriana confess her own misconduct in driving her husband mad.

"ABBESS. How long hath this possession held the man?
ADRIANA. This week he hath been heavy, sour, sad,
And much, much different from the man he was;
But, till this afternoon, his passion
Ne'er brake into extremity of rage.
ABBESS. Hath he not lost much wealth by wreck at sea?
Bury'd some dear friend? Hath not else his eye
Stray'd his affection in unlawful love?
A sin prevailing much in youthful men,
Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing
Which of these sorrows is he subject to?
ADRIANA. To none of these, except it be the last:
Namely, some love, that drew him oft from home.
ABBESS. You should for that have reprehended him
ADRIANA. Why, so I did.
ABBESS. But not rough enough.
ADRIANA. As roughly as my modesty would let me.
ABBESS. Hapily, in private.
ADRIANA. And in assemblies too.
ABBESS. Ay, but not enough.
ADRIANA. It was the copy of our conference:
In bed, he slept not for my urging it;
At board, he fed not for my urging it;
Alone it was the subject of my theme;
In company, I often glanc'd at it;
Still did I tell him it was vile and bad.
ABBESS. And therefore came it that the man was mad.
The venomed clamors of a jealous woman
Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.
It seems, his sleeps were hinder'd by thy railing:
And therefore comes it that his head is light.
Thou say'st his meat was sauc'd with thy upbraidings:
Unquiet meals make ill digestions,
Therefore the raging fire of fever bred:
And what's a fever but a fit of madness?
Thou say'st his sports were hinder'd by thy brawls:
Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue,
But moody and dull melancholy,
Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair;

And, at her heels, a huge infectious troop
Of pale distemperatures, and foes to life·
In food, in sport, and life-preserving rest
To be disturb'd, would mad or man or beast:
The consequence is then, thy jealous fits
Have scar'd thy husband from the use of wits.
LUCIANA. She never reprehended him but mildly,
When he demeaned himself rough, rude and wildly. —
Why bear you these rebukes and answer not?
ADRIANA. She did betray me to my own reproof."

Pinch the conjuror is also an excrescence not to be found in Plautus. He is indeed a very formidable anachronism.

"They brought one Pinch, a hungry, lean-fac'd villain,
A meer anatomy, a mountebank,
A thread-bare juggler and a fortune-teller,
A needy, hollow-eyed, sharp-looking wretch,
A living dead man."

This is exactly like some of the Puritanical portraits to be met with in Hogarth.

DOUBTFUL PLAYS OF

OF

SHAKSPEARE.

We shall give for the satisfaction of the reader what one celebrated German critic, Schlegel, says on this subject, and then add a very few remarks of our own.

"All the editors, with the exception of Capell, are unanimous in rejecting *Titus Andronicus* as unworthy of Shakspeare, though they always allow it to be printed with the other pieces, as the scape-goat, as it were, of their abusive criticism. The correct method in such an investigation is first to examine into the external grounds, evidences, &c., and to weigh their worth; and then to adduce the internal reasons derived from the quality of the work. The critics of Shakspeare follow a course directly the reverse of this; they set out with a preconceived opinion against a piece, and seek, in justification of this opinion, to render the historical grounds suspicious, and to set them aside. *Titus Andronicus* is to be found in the first folio edition of Shakspeare's works, which it is known was conducted by Heminge and Condell, for many years his friends, and fellow-managers of the same theatre. Is it possible to persuade ourselves that they would not have known if a piece in their repertory did or did not actually belong to Shakspeare? And are we to lay to the charge of these honorable men a designed fraud in this single case, when we know that they did not show themselves so very desirous of scraping everything together which went by the

name of Shakspeare, but, as it appears, merely gave those plays of which they had manuscripts in hand? Yet the following circumstance is still stronger: George Meres, a contemporary and admirer of Shakspeare, mentions *Titus Andronicus* in an enumeration of his works, in the year 1598. Meres was personally acquainted with the poet, and so very intimately, that the latter read over to him his sonnets before they were printed. I cannot conceive that all the critical scepticism in the world would be sufficient to get over such a testimony.

"This tragedy, it is true, is framed according to a false idea of the tragic, which by an accumulation of cruelties and enormities degenerates into the horrible, and yet leaves no deep impression behind: the story of Tereus and Philomela is heightened and overcharged under other names, and mixed up with the repast of Atreus and Thyestes, and many other incidents. In detail there is no want of beautiful lines, bold images, nay, even features which betray the peculiar conception of Shakspeare. Among these we may reckon the joy of the treacherous Moor at the blackness and ugliness of his child begot in adultery; and in the compassion of Titus Andronicus, grown childish through grief, for a fly which had been struck dead, and his rage afterwards when he imagines he discovers in it his black enemy, we recognize the future poet of *Lear*. Are the critics afraid that Shakspeare's fame would be injured, were it established that in his early youth he ushered into the world a feeble and immature work? Was Rome less the conqueror of the world because Remus could leap over its first walls? Let any one place himself in Shakspeare's situation at the commencement of his career. He found only a few indifferent models, and yet these met with the most favorable reception, because men are never difficult to please in the novelty of an art before their taste has become fastidious from choice and abundance. Must not this situation have had its influence on him before he learned to make higher demands on himself, and by digging deeper in his own mind, discovered the richest veins of a noble metal? It is even highly probable that he must have made several failures before getting into the right path. Genius is in a certain sense infallible, and has nothing to learn;

but art is to be learned, and must be acquired by practice and experience. In Shakspeare's acknowledged works we find hardly any traces of his apprenticeship, and yet an apprenticeship he certainly had. This every artist must have, and especially in a period where he has not before him the example of a school already formed. I consider it as extremely probable, that Shakspeare began to write for the theatre at a much earlier period than the one which is generally stated, namely, the year 1590. It appears that, as early as the year 1584, when only twenty years of age, he had left his paternal home and repaired to London. Can we imagine that such an active head would remain idle for six whole years without making any attempt to emerge by his talents from an uncongenial situation? That in the dedication of the poem of Venus and Adonis he calls it 'the first heir of his invention,' proves nothing against the supposition. It was the first which he printed; he might have composed it at an earlier period; perhaps, also, he did not include theatrical labors, as they then possessed but little literary dignity. The earlier Shakspeare began to compose for the theatre, the less are we enabled to consider the immaturity and imperfection of a work as a proof of its spuriousness, in opposition to historical evidence, if we only find in it prominent features of his mind. Several of the works rejected as spurious may still have been produced in the period betwixt *Titus Andronicus*, and the earliest of the acknowledged pieces.

"At last, Steevens published seven pieces ascribed to Shakspeare in two supplementary volumes. It is to be remarked, that they all appeared in print in Shakspeare's life-time, with his name prefixed at full length. They are the following:—

"1. *Locrine*. The proofs of the genuineness of this piece are not altogether unambiguous; the grounds for doubt, on the other hand, are entitled to attention. However, this question is immediately connected with that respecting *Titus Andronicus*, and must be at the same time resolved in the affirmative or negative.

"2. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. This piece was acknowledged by Dryden, but as a youthful work of Shakspeare. It is most undoubtedly his, and it has been admitted into several of the

late editions. The supposed imperfections originate in the circumstance, that Shakspeare here handled a childish and extravagant romance of the old poet Gower, and was unwilling to drag the subject out of its proper sphere. Hence he even introduces Gower himself, and makes him deliver a prologue entirely in his antiquated language and versification. This power of assuming so foreign a manner is at least no proof of helplessness.

"3. *The London Prodigal.* If we are not mistaken, Lessing pronounced this piece to be Shakspeare's, and wished to bring it on the German stage.

"4. *The Puritan; or, the Widow of Watling Street.* One of my literary friends, intimately acquainted with Shakspeare, was of opinion that the poet must have wished to write a play for once in the style of Ben Jonson, and that in this way we must account for the difference between the present piece and his usual manner. To follow out this idea, however, would lead to a very nice critical investigation.

"5. *Thomas, Lord Cromwell.*

"6. *Sir John Oldcastle, First Part.*

"7. *A Yorkshire Tragedy.*

"The three last pieces are not only unquestionably Shakspeare's, but in my opinion they deserve to be classed among his best and maturest works. Steevens admits at last, in some degree, that they are Shakspeare's, as well as the others, excepting *Locrine*, but he speaks of all of them with great contempt, as quite worthless productions. This condemnatory sentence is not, however, in the slightest degree convincing, nor is it supported by a critical acumen. I should like to see how such a critic would, of his own natural suggestion, have decided on Shakspeare's acknowledged master-pieces, and what he would have thought of praising in them, had the public opinion not imposed on him the duty of admiration. *Thomas, Lord Cromwell*, and *Sir John Oldcastle*, are biographical dramas, and models in this species: the first is linked, from its subject, to *Henry the Eighth*, and the second to *Henry the Fifth*. The second part of *Oldcastle* is wanting; I know not whether a copy of the old edition has been discovered in England, or whether it is lost. *The*

Yorkshire Tragedy is a tragedy in one act, a dramatised tale of murder: the tragical effect is overpowering, and it is extremely important to see how poetically Shakspeare could handle such a subject.

"There have been still farther ascribed to him:—1st. *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, a comedy in one act, printed in Dodsley's old plays. This has certainly some appearances in its favor. It contains a merry landlord, who bears a great similarity to the one in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. However, at all events, though an ingenious, it is but a hasty sketch. 2d. *The Accusation of Paris*. 3d. *The Birth of Merlin*. 4th. *Edward the Third*. 5th. *The Fair Emma*. 6th. *Mucedorus*. 7th. *Arden of Feversham*. I have never seen any of these, and cannot therefore say anything respecting them. From the passages cited, I am led to conjecture that the subject of *Mucedorus* is the popular story of Valentine and Orson; a beautiful subject, which Lope de Vega has also taken for a play. *Arden of Feversham* is said to be a tragedy on the story of a man, from whom the poet was descended by the mother's side. If the quality of the piece is not too directly at variance with this claim, the circumstance would afford an additional probability in its favor. For such motives were not foreign to Shakspeare: he treated Henry the Seventh, who bestowed lands on his forefathers for services performed by them, with a visible partiality.

"Whoever takes from Shakspeare a play early ascribed to him, and confessedly belonging to his time, is unquestionably bound to answer, with some degree of probability, this question: who did write it? Shakspeare's competitors in the dramatic walk are pretty well known, and if those of them who have even acquired a considerable name, a Lily, a Marlowe, a Heywood, are still so very far below him, we can hardly imagine that the author of a work, which rises so high beyond theirs, would have remained unknown."—*Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, vol. ii., p. 252.

We agree to the truth of this last observation, but not to the justice of its application to some of the plays here mentioned. It is true that Shakspeare's best works are very superior to those of Marlowe or Heywood, but it is not true that the best of the

doubtful plays above enumerated are superior or even equal to the best of theirs. *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, which Schlegel speaks of as an undoubted production of our author's, is much more in the manner of Heywood than of Shakspeare. The effect is indeed overpowering, but the mode of producing it is by no means poetical. The praise which Schlegel give to *Thomas, Lord Cromwell*, and to *Sir John Oldcastle*, is altogether exaggerated. They are very indifferent compositions, which have not the slightest pretensions to rank with *Henry V.* or *Henry VIII.* We suspect that the German critic was not very well acquainted with the dramatic contemporaries of Shakspeare, or aware of their general merits; and that accordingly he mistakes a resemblance in style and manner for an equal degree of excellence. Shakspeare differed from the other writers of his age not in the treating of his subjects, but in the grace and power which he displayed in them. The reason assigned by a literary friend of Schlegel's for supposing *The Puritan; or, the Widow of Watling Street*, to be Shakspeare's, viz., that it is in the style of Ben Jonson, that is to say, in a style just the reverse of his own, is not very satisfactory to a plain English understanding. *Locrine*, and *The London Prodigal*, if they were Shakspeare's at all, must have been among the sins of his youth. *Arden of Feversham* contains several striking passages, but the passion which they express is rather that of a sanguine temperament than of a lofty imagination; and in this respect they approximate more nearly to the style of other writers of the time than to Shakspeare's. *Titus Andronicus* is certainly as unlike Shakspeare's usual style as it is possible. It is an accumulation of vulgar physical horrors, in which the power exercised by the poet bears no proportion to the repugnance excited by the subject. The character of Aaron the Moor is the only thing which shows any originality of conception; and the scene in which he expresses his joy "at the blackness and ugliness of his child begot in adultery," the only one worthy of Shakspeare. Even this is worthy of him only in the display of power, for it gives no pleasure. Shakspeare managed these things differently. Nor do we think it a sufficient answer to say that this was an embryo or crude production of the author. In its kind it is full grown, and its features decided

and overcharged. It is not like a first imperfect essay, but shows a confirmed habit, a systematic preference of violent effect to everything else. There are occasional detached images of great beauty and delicacy, but these were not beyond the powers of other writers then living. The circumstance which inclines us to reject the external evidence in favor of this play being Shakspeare's is, that the grammatical construction is constantly false and mixed up with vulgar abbreviations, a fault that never occurs in any of his genuine plays. A similar defect, and the halting measure of the verse, are the chief objections to *Pericles of Tyre*, if we except the far-fetched and complicated absurdity of the story. The movement of the thoughts and passions has something in it not unlike shakspeare, and several of the descriptions are either the original hints of passages which shakspeare has ingrafted on his other plays, or are imitations of them by some cotemporary poet. The most memorable idea in it is in Marina's speech, where she compares the world to a "lasting storm, hurrying her from her friends."

POEMS AND SONNETS

Our idolatry of Shakspeare (not to say our admiration) ceases with his plays. In his other productions, he was a mere author, though not a common author. It was only by representing others, that he became himself. He could go out of himself, and express the soul of Cleopatra; but in his own person, he appeared to be always waiting for the prompter's cue. In expressing the thoughts of others, he seemed inspired; in expressing his own, he was a mechanic. The licence of an assumed character was necessary to restore his genius to the privileges of nature, and to give him courage to break through the tyranny of fashion, the trammels of custom. In his plays, he was "as broad and casing as the general air:" in his poems, on the contrary, he appears to be "cooped, and cabined in" by all the technicalities of art, by all the petty intricacies of thought and language which poetry had learned from the controversial jargon of the schools, where words had been made a substitute for things. There was, if we mistake not, something of modesty, and a painful sense of personal propriety at the bottom of this. Shakspeare's imagination, by identifying itself with the strongest characters in the most trying circumstances, grappled at once with nature, and trampled the littleness of art under his feet: the rapid changes of situation, the wide range of the universe, gave him life and spirit, and afforded him full scope to his genius; but returned into his closet again, and having assumed the badge of his profession, he could only labor in his vocation, and conform himself to existing models. The thoughts, the passions, the words which the poet's pen, "glancing from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," lent to others, shook off the fetters

of pedantry and affectation; while his own thoughts and feelings, standing by themselves, were seized upon as lawful prey, and tortured to death according to the established rules and practice of the day. In a word, we do not like Shakspeare's poems, because we like his plays: the one, in all their excellences, are just the reverse of the other. It has been the fashion of late to cry up our author's poems as equal to his plays: this is the desperate cant of modern criticism. We would ask, was there the slightest comparison between Shakspeare, and either Chaucer or Spenser, as mere poets? Not any.—The two poems of Venus and Adonis and of Tarquin and Lucrece appear to us like a couple of ice-houses. They are about as hard, as glittering, and as cold. The author seems all the time to be thinking of his verses, and not of his subject,—not of what his characters would feel, but of what he shall say; and as it must happen in all such cases, he always puts into their mouths those things which they would be the last to think of, and which it shows the greatest ingenuity in him to find out. The whole is labored, up-hill work. The poet is perpetually singling out the difficulties of the art to make an exhibition of his strength and skill in wrestling with them. He is making perpetual trials of them, as if his mastery over them were doubted. The images, which are often striking, are generally applied to things which they are the least like: so that they do not blend with the poem, but seem stuck upon it, like splendid patch-work, or remain quite distinct from it, like detached substances, painted and varnished over. A beautiful thought is sure to be lost in an endless commentary upon it. The speakers are like persons who have both leisure and inclination to make riddles on their own situation, and to twist and turn every object or incident into acrostics and anagrams. Everything is spun out into allegory; and a digression is always preferred to the main story. Sentiment is built up upon plays of words; the hero or heroine feels, not from the impulse of passion, but from the force of dialectics. There is besides a strange attempt to substitute the language of painting for that of poetry, to make us *see* their feelings in the faces of the persons; and again, consistently with this, in the description of the picture in Tarquin and Lucrece, those circumstances are

chiefly insisted on, which it would be impossible to convey except by words. The invocation to Opportunity in the Tarquin and Lucrece is full of thoughts and images, but at the same time it is over-loaded by them. The concluding stanza expresses all our objections to this kind of poetry :—

> "Oh! idle words, servants to shallow fools;
> Unprofitable sounds, weak arbitrators:
> Busy yourselves in skill-contending schools;
> Debate when leisure serves with dull debaters;
> To trembling clients be their mediators:
> For me I force not argument a straw,
> Since that my case is past all help of law."

The description of the horse in Venus and Adonis has been particularly admired, and not without reason ;—

> "Round hoof'd, short jointed, fetlocks shag and long,
> Broad breast, full eyes, small head and nostril wide,
> High crest, short ears, strait legs, and passing strong,
> Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide,
> Look what a horse should have, he did not lack,
> Save a proud rider on so proud a back."

Now this inventory of perfections shows great knowledge of the horse ; and is good matter-of-fact poetry. Let the reader but compare it with a speech in *The Midsummer Night's Dream* where Theseus describes his hounds—

> "And their heads are hung
> With ears that sweep away the morning dew"—

and he will perceive at once what we mean by the difference between Shakspeare's own poetry, and that of his plays. We prefer the Passionate Pilgrim very much to the Lover's Complaint. It has been doubted whether the latter poem is Shakspeare's.

Of the Sonnets we do not well know what to say. The subject of them seems to be somewhat equivocal ; but many of them are highly beautiful in themselves, and interesting as they relate to the state of the personal feelings of the author. The following are some of the most striking :—

CONSTANCY.

" Let those who are in favor with their stars,
Of public honor and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlook'd for joy in that I honor most.
Great princes' favorites their fair leaves spread,
But as the marigold in the sun's eye;
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foil'd,
Is from the book of honor razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd:
Then happy I, that love and am belov'd,
Where I may not remove, nor be remov'd."

LOVE'S CONSOLATION

" When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my out-cast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least:
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee,—and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate:
For thy sweet love remember'd, such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

NOVELTY.

" My love is strengthen'd, though more weak in seeming
I love not less, though less the show appear:
That love is merchandis'd whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish every where.
Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
When I was wont to greet it with my lays:
As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
And stops his pipe in growth of riper days:

Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
But that wild music burdens every bough,
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
Therefore, like her, I sometimes hold my tongue,
Because I would not dull you with my song."

LIFE'S DECAY. 73

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,
As after sun-set fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long."

In all these, as well as in many others, there is a mild tone of sentiment, deep, mellow, and sustained, very different from the crudeness of his earlier poems.

THE END.

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